



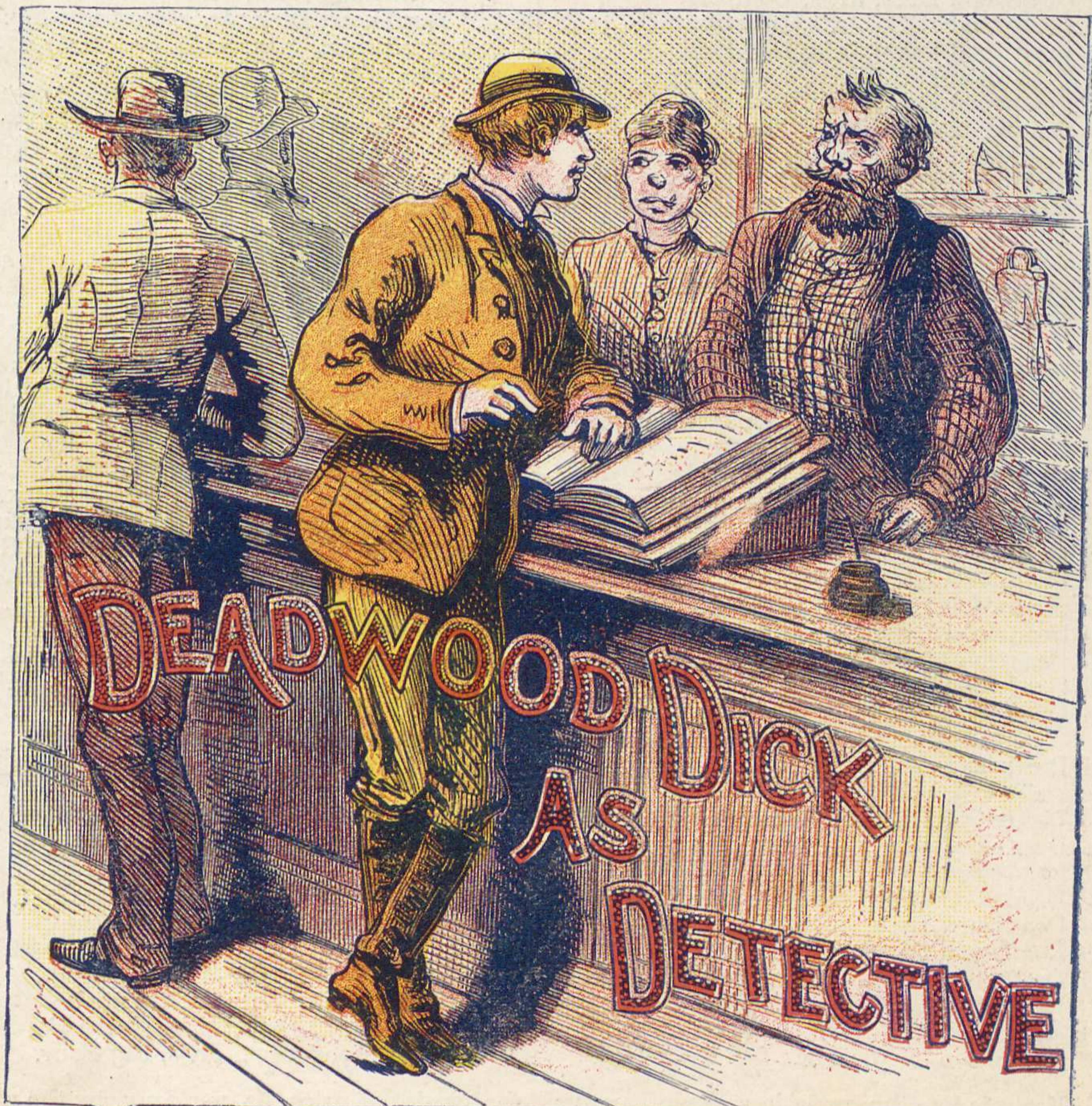
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Vol. II.



"PERAPS I HAD BETTER INQUIRE IF I'D BETTER STAY, OR IF I CAN STAY, ERE I REGISTER," HE
SAID WITH A PLEASANT SMILE.

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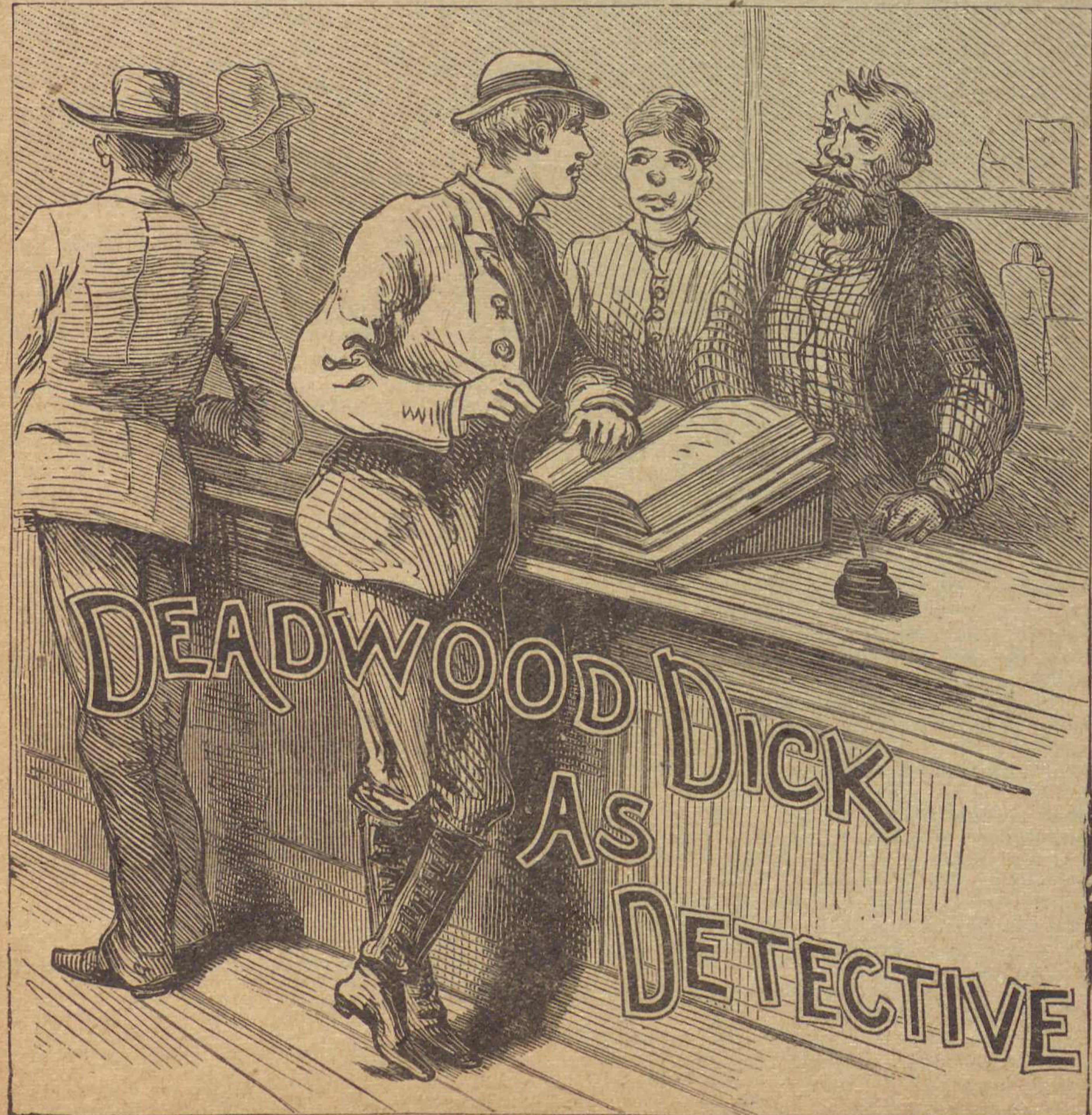
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"PERHAPS I MAD BETTER INQUIRE IF I'D BETTER STAY, OR IF I CAN STAY, ERE I REGISTER," HE
SAID WITH A PLEASANT SMILE.

Deadwood Dick as Detective.

A STORY of the GREAT CARBONATE REGION.

BY EDWARD L. WHEELER,

AUTHOR OF "DEADWOOD DICK" NOVELS, "ROSE-BUD ROB" NOVELS, ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

THE TRAP LAID.

FOUR and one-half miles northwest of Leadville, Colorado, as the crow flies, is a little gathering of houses down in the classic shades of California gulch—a small city, as it were, sprung into existence in a single night, and manned by as hard a crew of citizens, generally speaking, as ever hove-to in a Western city.

A stranger approaching the town could count the cabins, and make them out just a hundred and one, including the tavern, which was the starting and arriving point for the daily stages. A few stores, a barber-shop, laundry, post-office and smithy comprised the business stands; and one main street along the gulch bottom was all the town boasted of.

The name of this town had ever been a matter of dispute, and was yet, to some extent. After the town had realized its existence and its worth, several of its wiseacres had put their heads together for a name. As a result, John City was decided on; but others said that the name was too "toney" for a "rough-shod" place, and since then Rough Shod had been the inevitable nickname of the little metropolis.

A red-hot place was Rough Shod, despite its small size. Its mines were the best in the whole carbon region; its population was the most hardy and reckless; its laws were the most rigid, and stalwart Ben Johnson, the king of Vigilantes, held the helm in his fists, and things appertaining to Justice literally had to hum.

As a mining town, Rough Shod had a few things to be proud of: firstly, of her extensive carbon mines that were drifted into the walls of the canyon, and the famous Duncan mine which was owned by a woman whom no one knew; secondly, the muscular and fighting proclivities of the masses; and thirdly, the fact that money rapidly changed hands, and when one pilgrim got his fill he stepped out on the first stage, and made room for some one else, who had been less lucky.

One of the most important places in the town was the "Champion's Roost," kept by a big, burly ruffian from Virginia City, it being a combination of hotel, saloon, gambling-den, and sporting theater. On first entering you found yourself in the bar-room of the establishment, which was low and not too cleanly looking, with the bar at one side, and chairs and deal-tables scattered around for the accommodation of loungers.

Here it was that Captain Sal Savage dispensed his foul decoctions.

A big, overgrown, ruffianly looking individual he was, with a repulsive countenance, and bleared eyes, and stubby hair and beard, which added to the roughness of his appearance.

Directly in the rear of the saloon was another building, some twenty feet high from floor to ceiling, and eighty feet square, built after the pattern of one of the ancient bull-pits in Spain.

A space or pit some ten feet wide was left in the center of the building, from which the seats ranged upward in tiers like those in a circus tent. This place was known as Captain Sally's Sporting Theater, and when opened, was liberally patronized by the rougher class of Rough Shod's citizens. The hotel was over the saloon, and as there was but one other in the place, it was, as a rule, packed with people who had come to view Rough Shod's famous city, and sample Rough Shod's famous carbonates.

One evening in the month of June the bar-room of the "Roost" was not filled, as usual, but only Captain Sally and Nance, his ill-favored spouse, presided behind the bar, waiting for an occasional new-comer, whose appetite for beverage should lead him into the den.

Nance, as she was familiarly known, was not nearly so handsome as her amiable husband, for the reason that one eye was out, her mouth drawn slightly askew by paralysis, and all but two of her front teeth gone, to say nothing of eyes of greenish hue, and a nose that was red as a cherry, upon the end. No angel was Nance, either, when her temper was aroused. A hard pair were the Savages adjudged, and the prevailing opinion was not so far from being correct. But we shall note as we go on.

The evening was wet and nasty without, yet this did not prevent the entrance of one visitor to the bar-room of the "Roost," just as the wheezy clock tolled nine.

Nance and Sally exchanged glances at sight of their guest—glances in which was wonder, mystification.

An elderly gentleman was the new-comer, of corpulent proportions, and rather haughty carriage—a man with full brown beard of great length, dark eyes and hair to match. He was enveloped from boots to chin in a heavy rubber coat, with a hat to match, upon his head.

"A wet evenin', sir," Captain Sally ventured, from behind the bar, as the man paused to shake off the rain-drops that had collected upon his hat. "A werry wet evenin', I allow."

"Yes, wet and disagreeable; but just the night for dark deeds," the man returned, settling into a chair by a table. "You may fetch me a mint julep, Savage, and, by the way, I want a few minutes' chat with you on business matters."

Captain Sally hastened to obey, for his visitor, the Honorable Clancy Adair, was esteemed a great man in Rough Shod. A sort of sovereign or ruling-power was he in the place, for everybody looked up to him, and he was esteemed mayor, judge and jury.

He owned shares in several mines, had a cabin and a Chinaman up the gulch on the outskirts, and was generally regarded as the prime factor of the "infant city."

Captain Savage therefore hastened to prepare the beverage, which the Honorable Clancy accepted and quaffed, daintily, in the mean time motioning the captain to a seat.

"The stage has not arrived to-night, I take

it?" he observed, at last, setting down his glass, and lighting a fresh cherooot.

"No; et ain't in. Due, purty nigh, too."

"Well, in that case, I must come to business. In that stage, to-night, I expect an enemy—a young fellow in the character of a sportsman. He will come here, no doubt, and apply for lodgings. If he does, I want you to take care of him—do you understand?"

Captain Sally exchanged glances with Nance, who was behind the bar emptying a bottle.

"D'ye hear what the guv'nor sez, Nance? D'ye know what he means?"

"On course I do, you old fule. I ain't deff."

"No, on course you ain't, Nance. An angel, you are, ivery inch o' you. Tell him we ain't in the bizness, eh?"

"You needn't fabricate to make matters any the more plausible," Adair interrupted, grimly. "I've your pedigree all marked down, and you'd better talk sensible."

"On course we hed, pilgrim," Nance assented, bringing her fist down upon the bar solidly. "Thar ain't no use o' coverin' an' old sore wi' court-plaster, ef it's chronic. Don't ye mind that Sal Savage, fer he ain't wuth a row uv pins. I'm boss heer, I allow, an' ef ye've any business to transact, jest hitch onter me."

"No, ye ain't boss, nuther," Captain Sally growled, defiantly. "This be my Roost, an' this be my say. Go ahead, guv'nor. I'll 'tend ther galoot. I calculate ye want his disappearance permanently established, don't ye?"

"Exactly, I want him summarily disposed of, so that he won't come back again. I am not particular just how, but any way so that he is no further bother to me."

"All right, I'll see ter the job myself!" said Nance, from behind the bar. "I'll 'tend ther case, an' then cum an' tell ye. W'at's ther galoot's name?"

"Carroll Holly."

"Phew! dandified, I'll bet a snifter."

"Yes, you are right. He is dandified, in one sense of the word. I can depend upon you, then?"

"Yas, I'll do ther job!" Captain Sally replied.

"You shet up—ye won't do nothin' o' the kind!" vociferated Nance. "I'll bark your nose ef ye go to meddlin' with my bizness, Sal Savage!"

"Cuss ye, I'll knife ye ef ye mouth to me!" the captain swore, roundly. "What, goin' to leave us, guv'nor?"

"Yes, I must needs go before the stage arrives, and my enemy discovers me here," Adair replied, rising.

"But you've fergot one thing—ther root of all evil," Nance suggested, grimly. "Money makes the mare go, you see."

"Yes, that's true. Well, here are two fifty-dollar bills—one for each of you; so you can consolidate and make the matter easier."

"You'll never be troubled wi' yer enemy ag'in, you bet," Savage assured, with a heartless chuckle, as he followed the Honorable Clancy Adair to the door and ushered him out into the night. "He'll git a slice of cold steel in his gizzard afore morning, and I'll bet on't."

The mayor of Rough Shod did not reply, but hurried away, just as the rumble of the stage-

coach wheels came echoing down the canyon-gulch.

Not desirous was he to be seen by any person within the incoming coach, no matter if the man were Carroll Holly or not. A man of great depth at scheming, was the mayor, but withal a coward, and he believed in keeping on the safe side.

The stage-coach soon came tearing down into the little mountain-town, drawn by four spirited horses, and came to a halt in front of the Roost, while from it disembarked several passengers, and sought the shelter of Captain Sally's bar-room to get out of the soaking rain.

From behind the bar Captain Sally watched each man write his name upon the register, with great eagerness to learn who, out of the passengers, was the party Clancy Adair had condemned to death.

The first man to register was a tall, dark-faced man of possibly eight and twenty years, whose quiet manner betokened the experienced traveler. He was dressed well; wore a mustache and imperial, and was well armed. He seized the pen with a hand that was evidently practiced in penmanship, and wrote his name:

"BARRY MEREDITH, *Tourist.*"

"That ain't our game," Captain Sally muttered beneath his breath. "I allow as how the mayor sed it was Carroll Holler, or Holloa, or Holly—or sumthin' o' the kind."

The next to register was Joseph Rainbolt, a notable rifle-shot. Following him came a Mr. Josh Page, from New York, Oswald Yates, of Chicago, and Phineas Porter, detective, from New York.

The latter was a medium-sized individual, who looked as if he might have been a muscular celebrity in his yonth. His shoulders were now bent, however, and he walked with a cane. His face was fringed with hair and beard that were snowy white, and his eyes were concealed behind a pair of green goggles. Dressed in citizen's garb, and apparently unarmed, he was so different from any one in Rough Shod, as to at once attract considerable attention.

The last man to register was the one Captain Savage was watching for—Carroll Holly. A handsome fellow was the young man—the handsomest, perhaps, in all Rough Shod. Barely four-and-twenty was he, with a form that was the embodiment of perfect development and grace, and a fair, sunny face, with pleasant mouth and eyes of laughing blue, and hair as pretty as a ripple of summer sunshine. Really feminine he looked, yet was manly, vigorous, elastic.

He was attired in coarse but serviceable white duck, with a light wool hat upon his head, and knee-boots of the daintiest size and pattern upon his feet. He wore no jewelry, nor weapons, apparently, nor did he appear in the least put out by his rude surroundings.

"Perhaps I had better inquire if I'd better stay, ere I register," he said with a pleasant smile, "or if I can stay? I once registered in Yreka, and they wouldn't let me stay, because I sported a b'iled shirt."

"On course you kin stay, an' hev ther best

ther house affords!" Captain Sally grunted, as graciously as he knew how. "Reckon you be sum'at of a stranger around these parts, eh?"

"Well, yes—that is, around this new carbon-ate region," the sportsman replied, writing his name. "Have been roaming about up north, principally, for some time past, you see."

"Struck et rich, eh?"

"Oh! no. Never made much at prospecting."

"Speculatin', eh?"

"Yes, sometimes."

"Goin' to invest around here?"

"Doubtless, if I strike a lead."

Then the young man lit a cigar and sauntered away.

Captain Sally brushed by Nance with a nudge.

"That's our game. Now see't you keep yer optics glued onter him, while I go and sharpen up my carvin'-knife. I don't want no dull tools, ter-night," he said, in a low tone.

A more private lounging-room was attached to the bar-room, and Carroll Holly sauntered into it, to escape the hubbub.

A young woman was sitting by a table writing, while she smoked a cigarette. One glance it took to tell that she was not handsome. Her form was large and bony, her face coarse in its features, and freckled. Her hair was frowsy, her eyes dull and sullen in their expression; her hands large as a man's.

The only prepossessing part of her appearance, was the richness of the dress and jewels she wore.

She looked up so sourly as Carroll entered, that he would have turned back, had not the expression upon her face softened somewhat, when she saw that it was not the one she had been expecting.

"Excuse me," she said, half-rising, with a courtesy. "I tho't 'twas the old man. Come in."

"Not if I am intruding. I took this to be a lounging-room."

"So it is. Ye won't disturb me. Come in."

Young Holly entered.

The girl's tones were more imperative than inviting, and he was puzzled.

"Take a cheer," she said, pointing to a seat on the opposite side of the table. "I reckon you're the very galoot I want to see."

"I?" Carroll said, coolly, but yet in great surprise.

"Yes, you. Strikes me you're the very chap. Your handle's California Charlie, alias Buckshot Bill, alias Carroll Holly!"

She spoke positively, rather than interrogatively, and Carroll was nonplussed.

"Who told you?" he demanded, coolly.

"Oh! as to that I was in the city of Mexico, three years ago, when you came there and licked a dozen Greasers, single-handed, in front of a gambling den."

"Indeed? What is your name?"

"California Kate fer short, though I reckon I'm writ down Kate Savage in scripter. I belong ter ther old man an' woman, yonder;" and she nodded toward the bar-room.

"Oh!" Carroll said. That was all.

"I heerd you inquired fer to-night, an' reckied

you when you come in," Kate pursued, drumming on the table with her bejeweled fingers.

"Heard me inquired for?" Carroll exclaimed, in astonishment. "By whom, pray?"

"Oh! by a prominent chap. 'Tain't none o' my business, ye see, an' ef it hadn't been as how you war a good-lookin' galoot, an' I knew you war game, I shouldn't 'a' sed a word. But 'twixt you an' me, I'd advise ye ter luk out fer yerself, or else go rent a lot in a cemetery up heer, in case of emergency."

Carroll stared.

"You don't mean that my life is in danger, young lady?"

"Waal, now, I ain't a-goin' ter tell you no more!" Kate said decisively, "but from all that I heerd, I shed opine thar war prospect o' a funeral. Leastways, ef I war you, 'twixt me an' you, I shouldn't go to bed without a good-sized bull-dog under my piller!"

And with this comforting advice, the belle of the Roost bid the young American adieu, and left the room.

CHAPTER II.

THE ASSASSIN'S ATTACK.

To say that Carroll Holly was surprised would be drawing it mild. Cool, and accustomed to surprises, he usually passed them by without comment; but this was one he had not counted on.

A total stranger was he in the little mountain city, and yet somebody had evidently bespoken for him a warm reception.

He was aware that he had a few enemies in the world—no man can carry his own without having them—but he was at fault when he cast about for one on whom to lay the suspicion.

"The girl's got a heart, after all," he muttered, "though nature didn't do a pleasing job on her exterior. I remember now of having heard of her—a sword-player, or something of the kind. So the host and hostess are her parents, eh? A hard-looking pair at best."

After smoking a cigar in reflection, he applied for directions to his room, and was shown to a small one over the bar-room, after which his guide, who was Captain Sally in person, took his departure.

Besides being small, the room was illy lighted by a dirty window. The floor was bare; the only furniture was a bed and bedstead, a chair, and a rude bench containing a tin wash-dish and a bucket of water. A door opened out of each end of the room, besides the one through which he had entered, but both were locked, and he could only surmise that they opened into adjoining rooms.

"Rather a fair chance to get at me, anyhow, if the girl's hints have any foundation of truth," Carroll mused, viewing his surroundings. "I'll go to bed, anyhow, and rest, for I'm as tired as a pack-horse. It will be strange if I cannot sleep with one eye open."

Throwing himself upon the bed, he lay for several hours and listened to the noises below, and out in the street of the restless town.

But finally sleep would no longer put off her claims, and foreclosed her mortgage over the weary traveler.

The hours passed by.

The candle in the holder burnt down to a spluttering taper.

After midnight the noises ceased, and the town was wrapped in the quiet of a tomb. Not so much as a yell or the rumble of a wheel was heard.

Then, after a pause, one of the three doors to Carroll Holly's room opened, and two dusky figures stole softly into the room—stealthily, as if upon a mission of crime. It will be scarcely necessary to mention that they were the Savages, Sally and Nance. They had come to do the terrible deed that the Honorable Clancy Adair had instigated. Captain Sally was armed with a long, glittering knife, and led in advance.

"Sh! pick up yer durned elephant's feet, an' don't make so much noise!" he growled, pausing near the door. "'Ihar's our fatted calf, an' ef ye ain't purtickler about gittin' hurt, ye hedn't better 'waken him. He's as spry as a cat, and as limber as an eel, I'll bet."

"Pshaw! you're an old fool!" Nance said, in evident huge disgust. "Go ahead and knife him, if ye're goin' to, and don't make so many bones of it. I'll be close behind ter help search him!" Nance said, grimly.

"No, ye won't. I'll s'arch 'im myself. Ef ye want ter sheer in the sp'iles, you've got ter take ther knife an' do the job!" the worthy host of the "Roost" said, with a chuckle.

Nance shrunk back a bit at this, her eyes dilating.

"Go ahead!" she gasped. "You knife him!"

Captain Sally wiped the blade of his knife across his bootleg, and smiled in a horribly significant way; then, with the knife clutched firmly in his right hand, stole softly toward the bed whereon the young man was lying in sound repose.

Nearer and nearer he approached the bed, the knife now uplifted in his hand, ready for the blow; the eyes of Nance were fixed upon him; another moment, and the life of Carroll Holly would go out beneath the assassin's blow!

But it was destined that the blow should not be struck.

For just then there came a shrill whisper through the room, that caused the guilty couple to start, and gaze around in alarm.

To behold, standing on the threshold of the room, no less a personage than their own child, California Kate—she, and none other, with a pair of revolvers in her hands, leveled full at them!

"Stop!" she said, in a shrill whisper, embodying stern command. "Stop, curse you, or I'll put a bullet through ye both!"

"The devil!" Captain Savage growled.

"You, Kate!" Nance gasped, paling. "Leave the room, you young vixen!"

"You shut up!" Kate advised, angrily. "Give me five cents' worth o' yer jaw, an' I'll plug ye as quick as I would a buzzard. Ye're a purty pair, ain't ye? I'm proud o' ye, I am, you bet. Goin' to knife a poor pilgrim jest fer a paltry sum o' money! Shame on ye!"

"See here, gal, ye'r on the wrong tack, on-tirely," Captain Sally explained, in a low tone. "We're jest practicing fer ther stage, ye see—me an' Nance, an' this be one o' our parts o' ther

play. Now ye keep still, an' we'll finish wi'out wakin' the chap. Ain't it so, Nancy, dear?"

"On course it is!" Nance assented.

"On course it ain't!" California Kate said, coolly. "On course ye can't pull wool over my eyes fer a cent, and ef ye don't slide out of here in waltz-clog time, I'll know why. D'ye want me ter wake up that feller, an' tell him ye war jest goin' ter knife him? Ef ye don't git up and git, now—d'ye heer."

"Darn ye, gal, I'll pound daylight out o' ye when I git my claws on ye!" Nance growled fiercely, her fingers opening and shutting, and her eyes blazing luridly. "I'll larn ye ter snoop inter ther bizness o' yer respectable aged sires—I will. Come along, old man. The gal means et!"

"You bet yer bonus I do!" Kate cried, threateningly, following them to the door. "I'm goin' ter see this galoot through safe till mornin', an' ef I ketch ye up-stairs ag'in, ye'll go down on a rush."

Grumbling and cursing as they full well knew how, the evil pair took their way down-stairs, while California Kate went and stood by the bedside of Carroll Holly, and gazed down into his face, the usually sullen expression in her eyes softening.

"He's a reg'lar beauty, an' the old man'd been his last sickness, ef I hadn't cum in and kicked ag'in' it," she muttered. "Wonder if he'd thank me, ef I'd tell him that I'd rescued him?"

She sat musing over this problem for some time thereafter, with her chair drawn close to the bedside, while Carroll slept sweetly. She was interested in him, which was something extraordinary, for they who knew California Kate knew that she had been a bitter man-hater from childhood up, inasmuch as it seemed to give her pleasure to slay them in gladiatorial contests. No man ever approached her with love—some said because she was so homely, but the real cause was because they were afraid of getting salivated.

Carroll awoke by and by, and seeing her sitting by the bed, was surprised, as was evident from the startled expression that came across his face.

"Oh! it's you, eh?" he said, when he caught a glimpse of her face. "I didn't know—"

"Yes, et's me!" Kate assented, rising, "an' sence ye're awake, I'll go. Only, ef ye want ter live till morning, ye'd better not go to sleep ag'in."

"Why not?"

"Because ye hedn't. Ef I hadn't been scentin' danger, and cum, jest as I did, you'd have been knifed clean through an' through. I cum along wi' a full hand, and dispersed 'em."

"You did?" Carroll exclaimed, sitting suddenly up on the bed. "Then, let me tender you my earnest thanks. Who were these would-be assassins?"

"I reckon you'll guess, wi'out askin' any more questions, when I advise ye ter seek another and healthier climate than Captain Sally's "Roost!"

Carroll whistled a single shrill note.

"I see," he muttered. "Your father and mother are turned against me."

"Exactly."

"Why are they thus? What did I ever do to cause their enmity?"

"Nothing, as I know on; but you see they war hired to give you a final 'boost, an' they'd nev give it to ye, ef I hadn't interposed."

"Do you know the name of the party who hired them?"

"I reckon I do, but fer reasons o' my own, I can't tell ye. Ef ye go about the town very much, ye're liable to meet him, most any minute."

"Very well," Carroll said, quietly. "I'll hunt the fellow up, and chastise him. And if ever I can in any way do you a good turn, be sure that I shall do so, if called upon."

California Kate bowed, and turning left the room, and also left Carroll Holly in a deep study that verged upon perplexity.

On the following morning, which shortly dawned, Carroll set out upon the street to find his enemy. He first, however, paid for his lodging at the bar, without mentioning to the host or hostess his knowledge of their attempt upon his life.

Rough Shod boasted of but one narrow gulch street, but it was of considerable length, and flanked on either side by stores, saloons and cabins.

Along this Carroll took his way, leisurely, scanning the face of each man he met, to learn if he could trace any resemblance there, to any person he had ever known.

But they were all rough-bearded faces of miners, going to their work, except an occasional gambler or sporting character, distinguished from the rest by his flashy attire.

As he was walking along, Carroll caught sight of a sign over the door of a little store that attracted more than his idle attention.

The store was neat and clean-looking on the outside; a neat display of confectionary filled the show window; the sign over the door read:

"EDITH YATES, CONFECTIONER."

This suggested a young and pretty lady, and Carroll went in. He had been traveling in the mountains for months, and had seen so few pretty women that the thought of seeing one was appetizing.

Nor was he mistaken in the character and appearance of the proprietress of the candy-shop.

She was young and pretty—exceedingly pretty, he thought, as she stood behind the counter in her simple pink lawn dress and white apron, with a bunch of delicate mountain flowers at her throat, her luxuriant brown hair falling in an unconfined ripple to her waist.

Her face was pretty, too, with classic features, and the sweetest little mouth, whose merry curve was but in unison with her dancing eyes of blue.

Indeed, Carroll was instantly sure that he had not met with so pretty a picture in years, if ever at all.

Purchase? Of course he did; and right liberally, too—at any rate, a five-dollar note soon found its way into her money-drawer, and he was burdened with quite a load of sweets.

"Ah! I see you have cigars, too, and as I am

hungry for a smoke, you may give me a couple of them on trial, although, I dare say they are the best the market affords," with a smile.

"I trust so," Miss Yates said, with becoming modesty. "I always try to get the best."

"Do you make this sort of business pay in so small a town?"

"Hardly. Had I not a mine to back me, I fear I should be sold out at sheriff's sale, ere long," with a quiet smile.

"You *have* a mine, then?" Carroll Holly asked, as he pocketed his candies.

"Oh! yes, although you are one of a very few who know it. The Duncan mine belongs to me."

"Ah!" Carroll said.

He had heard of the famous Duncan mine, which was said to be the property of a woman, although there were none who could point the woman out.

The mine was one of the richest of its kind in the region, and employed a large number of laborers, who were under the superintendency of a close-mouthed, reticent man named Alert.

"You must be proud of such a princely possession, miss. I have heard it spoken of as the 'boss' mine of this region."

"Oh, no, I am not proud. The mine yields a goodly sum, but I devote all except what I need for my moderate expenses, to charitable institutions in the East."

"That is kind in you, at least. Do you live in the East when at home?" Carroll asked. Gradually he was drawing her into a conversation that was the forerunner of an acquaintance.

"No; my home is here. I once, however, lived in Chicago, until reverses caused me to seek a livelihood in this wild country. I fortunately came into possession of the Duncan mine, through the kindness of some stranger whom I never saw, and so am placed above want, where otherwise I might have suffered."

"Very true. This is a poor place for a young lady without money or friends. Something rather romantic about this gift of the mine, wasn't there?"

"Some might say so. I have been considerably mystified, but have kept my secret so well that very few know anything about it."

As she said no more on the subject, Carroll had to satisfy his curiosity with what he had learned.

After a few more commonplace remarks, he took his leave of the fair shopkeeper, inwardly vowing to return again as soon as he could find an excuse, and pursue the acquaintance.

A man had been standing across the street from the candy-shop, since Carroll entered, and when he came out and went down the street, this man crossed over and entered the candy-shop.

Edith was behind the counter, re-arranging her trays of candies, but looked up with her customary pleasant expression, which reminded one of a beam of sunshine.

The man was Phineas Porter, detective.

"Excuse me, miss," he said, doffing his hat, "but I have a little matter of business on hand, and I want to enlist you in my service."

"Me, sir?" Edith exclaimed, in considerable surprise.

"Yes, miss. I am a detective by profession, and having just arrived in this town, there are a few questions I want answered."

"Very well, sir. If I can accommodate you in that way, I shall not object," Edith replied, eying the detective with considerable curiosity.

"In the first place, who was that young gent who just left this shop?" Phineas Porter asked, taking out a memorandum-book and a pencil.

"I have not the slightest idea, sir."

"Oh! you haven't, eh?"

"No, sir. You probably could ascertain at the hotel."

"Ah! yes. Well, nextly, is there a man in the town named Algernon Ashton?"

"Not to my knowledge, sir. I don't recollect of hearing such a name spoken."

A sound something like a snarl came from the detective's lips.

"You are sure?" he asked, eying her so steadily as to cause her to feel uneasy.

"Quite sure, sir."

"Probably you are right," he muttered, more to himself than to her. "He may have assumed a disguise."

He drummed a couple of minutes on the showcase, then turning, he abruptly left the shop.

Edith went to the door and watched him go down the street, in a state of perplexity and amusement.

"I wonder who he is, and who Algernon Ashton is, and what he wants, anyhow?" she mused, watching him until he had disappeared from view. "He seemed terribly put out about something."

CHAPTER III.

MEREDITH SCHEMES.

"EDITH! Edith!" called a voice from an apartment in the rear of the shop. "Edith, do you hear?"

The voice was like the wail of some tortured spirit, and Edith turned back into the shop with a little sigh.

"Yes, Minnie," she said, opening a door into a little sitting-room, and entering—a room that was ill-furnished and rudely furnished, yet which had the quiet comforts of a home.

"Here I am, sister; what do you want?"

A pale, wan face looked up from the depths of a large cushioned chair, where a young woman was bolstered up, with a tiny baby in her arms—a face devoid of every trace of color, with the eyes sunken and haggard in their expression.

Once beautiful, as was still perceptible, the invalid was hanging on a thread as it were, between life and eternity. The babe, too, was a fretful, puny little stranger, who looked as if it might follow the consumptive mother to the grave.

"Here I am, Minnie, dear; what do you want?" Edith asked, sympathy and affection in her tones.

"I wanted you because I am lonely, and oh! so tired," the invalid said, wearily. "Who came to the shop, Edith?"

"Two men—one a customer, the other a detective. And such a funny-acting man, the latter was, too!"

"The other was young and handsome, eh?"

A little flush stole to Edith's cheek, caused by the sharpness of her sister's tone.

"Yes, some might call him such," she replied, dropping her gaze.

"I thought as much. Edith, you are a fool!" her sister said.

"Why, Minnie!"

"Yes, a deliberate fool, if you look twice at any of the men who come into your store. In the name of Heaven, girl, have I not suffered enough, that you should not know better than to foster a single thought of a handsome face?"

"There! there! sister, do not get excited, for I have not so much as thought twice of the stranger. Be quiet now, for I have some work to do in the store yet, you know."

And leaving a kiss upon the cheek of the invalid, Edith hastened back to her shop duties, with a brow that was now clouded with sorrow.

That afternoon a big, strapping bullwhacker, known about the town as Pineapple Pete, on account of his inordinate fondness for the tropical fruit of which his name savored, came stalking into the candy-shop, looking as rough and uncouth as a professional tramp.

Straight into the shop marched Rough Shod's principal bully, with the air of a millionaire, and leaned upon the counter, preparatory to opening a conversation.

Edith became attentive, for she was afraid of the rough customer, although he had never offered to molest her.

"Good-evenin', miss," Pineapple Pete said, bowing graciously. "Mebbe my visit ar' ruther suddint an' unexpected, an' ag'in mebbe my austere presence intimidates ye, but ye see as how I hed a leetle business with ye, an' I tho't as how I'd better drap in on ye an' propagate a dicker. D'ye see?"

"I see. Go ahead," Edith said, briefly.

"Keerect! Go ahead—on course I will, my posey—cl'ar fer all I'm worth. Hain't got a visitin'-keerd—nothin' short o' a Jack o' spades, but then, et don't matter so much, fer like's not, you've heerd my appellative hyar in this town o' Rough Shod. Pineapple Pete they call me, because I luv pineapples better than anything on this yearth 'cept tarant'ler and pritty gals. But Pineapple Pete, howsumdever, ain't nothin' but pure unmitigated fiction. But a few short weeks ago, I roosted and fluttered my feathers down in Leadville, an' thar I was known as Beautiful Bill, ther Pet Elephant o' ther Leadville trail—ther Apoller of ther Colorados. Yes, sir-ee, and bob-tailed horse. Beautiful Bill am I, an' I can lick ary man as won't say 'Hoddy do' ter ther Goddess o' Liberty."

"But, what has all this to do with my business?" Edith demanded, testily, for she feared and was disgusted with the loafer. "Please state what you want, and then go."

"Tut, tut, little gal, don't be crabbed neow. Ye don't realize, mebbe, that ye're in ther presence o' a meteoric comet—a thunderbolt, a ragin' cyclone. Beauty combined wi' bizness, am I, clean to the backbone, you bet. And now fer my errand. Mebbe you've lived in these parts longer than I hev, an' mebbe, too, ye can tell me ef ye know a man in Rough Shod named Algernon Ashton?"

Edith started. Here, then, was another inquiry after Algernon Ashton.

First it was Phineas Porter who had asked; now it was the greasy loafer, Pineapple Pete, alias Beautiful Bill. What was the mystery?

"I never heard of such a man, nor do I think there is such a man in the town," Edith replied.

"Are you sure you never heard the name?" the loafer demanded, eying her keenly.

"Quite sure. Why should I know such a person, sir?"

"Waal, I thought mebbe ye might hev heerd sech a name," was the reply, and then turning upon his heel he left the shop.

Honorable Clancy Adair dwelt in a small cabin at the northern end of the town. Inside his abode he had the usual comforts of a miner's camp, and in addition, had a Chinaman to cook his meals for him.

On the same evening of Beautiful Bill's call at the candy-shop, the speculator was sitting in his cabin engaged in reading, and smoking his pipe, when there entered no less a personage than Captain Sally Savage.

Adair looked up with a frown until he saw who it was, when he simply motioned the host of the "Roost" to a seat.

"Well?" he demanded, interrogatively.

"Not by a long shot, et ain't well," Captain Sally replied, grimly. "Leastwise, ef ye mean about that job o' last night, yer Honor."

"Well, what about it?" the mayor demanded angrily. "Did you let the fellow escape?"

"Nary a time—not we, fer that ain't ther caliber o' me an' my old woman. When we take in a job, we allus freeze to et, like grim death to a nigger. But yer see, we didn't quite cook our chicken this time!"

His mayorship uttered a snarl of rage.

"You are an accursed blockhead!" he growled. "I should have intrusted the job to better hands. Go on, and tell me about it."

"Waal, ye see," Captain Sally said, ingulfiing a huge chew of tobacco, "thet I and Nance had laid ther trap all right, an' had got as far as his room, when my gal, Kate, she stuck in her snoot, accompanied by a full hand o' barkers, an' we had ter puckachee."

"And Carroll Holly is abroad, a free man?" Honorable Clancy asked, excitedly.

"I reckon he is. Leastways, he pulled out o' my establishment, an' he's been on the street ter-day, a-lookin' fer ther galoot as tried to pepper him."

"Curse him! He shall not long enjoy his freedom!" the other replied, fiercely. "I'll have him out of harm's way if I have to murder him myself."

In Rough Shod's famous city there was an urchin named Jimmy Flynn, whom nobody was related to.

Jimmy had turned up in Rough Shod, one morning, a dirty, ragged little customer of eleven or twelve years—a lad, with all his squalidness, who possessed a bright, intelligent face, and brick-red hair, and eyes that betrayed a shrewd nature.

When asked where he hailed from, he replied that he had "footed it" from Frisco, and pro-

ducing a blacking box, he would forthwith "bounce" the inquirer for a shine. As a result he was soon richer by twenty-five cents, which he shoved into his trowsers pocket, and went off whistling.

That was all anybody ever learned in regard to him, except that he was sharp and shrewd at a bargain, and possessed of a ready knack at money-making.

About the same time that Clancy Adair was holding a conversation with Captain Sally, Jimmy Flynn had a customer. Mr. Barry Meredith, tourist, was the party before whom Jimmy knelt, and worked industriously in polishing a pair of boots sized number five, a least. And an artist was Jimmy, as was evident by the shine he produced.

"Thar yer ar', sur," he said, rising and holding out a hand to receive his fee, which was not remarkable for its cleanness.

"It's a fine job, as no quane would care ter criticise, an' it's a quarter I'm wantin'."

"And it's a quarter you shall have," replied Meredith, with a slight laugh, as he tossed the coin up in the air, and Jimmy nimbly sprung forward and caught it between his teeth. "But, here, don't be in a hurry, my lad. I've another job for you, for which I'll give you a dollar."

"Arrah! thin I'm yer lad, me darlint. Give us ther twig an' ther twicker, an' bedad I'm off at it like a Frisco moskeeter on a raid fer free lunch."

"All right; come with me, and I will give you the work to do at once, and the pay after you're done."

"Nary, yer Honer; et's mesilf as kicks loike a mule, sure. Pay as yez goes, an' ye'll never git in debt."

"Ha! ha! a very good bit of advice. Well, come along, and you shall have your salary in advance. I suppose you know everybody in the town?—that is, you are extensively acquainted?"

"Sure, I know ivery man, woman an' four-legged baste in the town," Jimmy replied, with due pride, for he esteemed it a great honor to know all the people in Rough Shod's little city, albeit there were some hard characters that were not worth knowing.

Barry Meredith made no further inquiries, but led the way to the rival hotel of the town, which was much larger and more convenient than Savage's "Roost."

The tourist had found out this fact, and changed boarding-places at once.

To a pleasant room on the second floor of the hotel, he led the way, and gave Jimmy Flynn a chair, while he seated himself at a table, and wrote hastily upon a delicate sheet of note-paper. Inclosing it when finished in an envelope to match, he turned to the Irish lad.

"Here, my son, is a note, which I want delivered. But, first, tell me if you know the whereabouts of a young lady named Edith Yates? It is to her I wish this note to be given."

"Yates, is it?" Jimmy muttered, scratching his bricky head—"Edith Yates? Sure an' et must be the candy-woman up the street."

"Describe her, and I can soon tell you," Meredith replied, excitedly. "Is she good-looking, with brown hair, and blue eyes, and—"

"Fot the devil do I know about how she looks

whin I never seen her, at all?" Jimmy demanded. "Sure, if it's the candy-woman yez mane, tha say she's as purty as the Vargin Mary."

"It is probably the same," Meredith muttered, a strange gleam in his dusky eyes.

"At any rate, you can take this note to her, and bring me back an answer. Here is your dollar, for the job."

Jimmy first took the dollar, and then the note and with a broad grin took his departure.

While Meredith paced the room, a grim contraction of the brows betraying vexation.

"I know well enough what her answer will be," he muttered, the contraction deepening into a scowl. "It will be 'No! a thousand times no!' but I care not. If she remains implacable, Minnie will not. Ha, ha!"

In the mean time Jimmy Flynn hurried away on his errand and soon made the candy-shop, to find Edith engaged in dusting her counter, and singing a snatch from a pretty ballad.

And when Jimmy shook the note under her chin, she looked surprised. Never since her coming to Leadville had she seen a letter; the sight of one was therefore refreshing.

"Let me have it if it is for me," she said, reaching forth her hand.

"Arrah! be aisy, me darlint, an' if ye can't be aisy, be aisy's as ye can!" quoth Jimmy, dancing about. "But, comin' ter biz, be you Missus Edith Yates, what is good-lookin', wi' brown hair and blue eyes?"

"I am Edith Yates. Give me the letter, sir."

"Faith, and isn't it thet same thet I'm after doin', me jewel? You're as onpatient as Mrs. McCarthy's pig. There's the letter, mum, an' tha sender said as how I was to fetch the loikes o' him an answer."

Edith seized the letter eagerly, and tore off the wrapper, but the moment she caught sight of the handwriting, she staggered back with a gasp, her face suddenly grown pale.

The note was written in a stylish hand, and ran as follows:

"MISS EDITH YATES:—

"DEAR LADY:—I have at last found you, arter a long and earnest search in every State and Territory in the Union. Perhaps now you will believe in my good intentions when I come to tell you that my coming here is on purpose to make poor Minnie my wife—poor, dear Minnie, whom I have so foully wronged and deserted in the past. But God knows that I mean to do the square thing now, and marry the dear girl, and thus lift forever from her young life the cl'ud of disgrace.

"Therefore, I first write this to ask your pardon, and request that I may be permitted to come and see you—and Minnie, and my child.

"Repentantly, BARRY MEREDITH."

This was all, but enough to cause the eyes of Edith Yates to fairly blaze with anger and indignation.

"He shall have his answer!" she said, with a bitter little laugh, and going behind the counter she hastened to pen the reply, which, when finished, read as follows:

"SIR:—Your note is received. No, Barry Meredith, you can never set foot within my home, except at the peril of your life, for if you do I will shoot you, if I hang for it within the next hour. You are a double-dyed villain, and we both hate you as a snake hates fire. Take warning by this, and keep away, as you will find that I am not afraid of you. You shall

never look upon the face of your victim, if I can help it.

Loathingly,

"EDITH YATES."

"There, take that back to him," she said, giving the note to Jimmy Flynn—"take it to him, with my bitterest curse."

"Faith, an' I will do that same, mum, but where is the curse, mum? Yez didn't give it to me."

Edith was forced do smile even though she was greatly angered.

"Tell him that I curse him—that will be sufficient," she said.

Jimmy bowed, and took his leave, greatly wondering.

Straight back to Barry Meredith he went with Edith's reply, and the man read it with a cynical smile curving his sensual lips.

"Very well," he said, grimly. "It is no more than I expected. Let her look out, herself. It is not her sister that I cared for—ha! ha! no, but for her proud self. Yes, and I'll humble that superfine spirit of hers, if I have to raise these very mountains—I swear it by all I hold sacred in the next world."

"Shure, an' if it's any liftin' jobs yez have, I can lift as many pounds on top of a meal of bafe and peraties, as the next man," Jimmy said, promptly.

"Well, let me see. Perhaps I've another job for you," Meredith said, thoughtfully. "I'll write another note, and you are to take it back to the same place you did this, only you are to give it to a woman who has a baby, and whose name is Minnie. This you are to do without the knowledge of the woman Edith. Do you understand?"

"Arrah! it's mesilf that does. And am I to have another dollar for the job?"

"Ay! five of them, if you succeed in doing as I have directed. Now, you go out and skirmish around in the neighborhood of the candy-shop, and find out all of the points, while I write the note, which will be ready for you in an hour."

Timmy bowed, and took his departure, while Barry Meredith seized pen and paper and seated himself at a table.

"Now for a touching, loving letter," he muttered, with a mocking smile—"such a one as will bring Minnie to my arms, wherever I may beckon her. Once in my power she shall never—"

He did not finish the sentence but abruptly began writing.

CHAPTER IV.

DEADWOOD DICK.

As he had said, it was his purpose to write a loving letter, and he soon had it finished, and it read:

"DEAREST MINNIE:—I write this to let you know that I have come to Rough Shod in search of you—no longer to act the part of an unprincipled villain, but to hunt you up and marry you—yes, marry you, my darling, for I now realize how bitterly I have wronged you in the past, and I want to atone by making you my precious wife. I have found that my life is a dull, aching void without your cheery presence, and I want you for my wife—want to lift from you the cloud of disgrace, and give to our babe a name."

For the love of Heaven, listen to me, Minnie, and do not cast this aside in scorn. I have already written to your sister, but she is immovable and threatens to shoot me if I come near her. Say nothing of this note to her, but if you will, slip from the house, unnoticed, and come down the gulch until you meet me and the minister. It will not take long to tie the knot, and when we return to your sister, we shall be man and wife.

“Come, I beg of you.

“BARRY MEREDITH.”

This was all, and the schemer read it with evident satisfaction.

“That is a clever decoy, and I think will have a direct bearing on the case. Ha! ha! I curse you in return, Edith Yates, and defy you, too. Once I get your sister in my power, you shall never look upon my face or hers, again, unless—”

Jimmy Flynn entered at this juncture, and the schemer looked at him, inquiringly.

“Well, my lad, what did you find out?”

“Sure, an’ fot the devil did you expect? I found out where Edith Yates lives.”

“You fool, is that all?”

“Bedad, no. Be aisy, an’ I’ll tell yez. There be a small room forinst the rear av the sthore, an’ thare be a woman in it, ‘mit von baby,’ as the Dutch sez.”

“Good. That is the identical woman,” Meredith cried, excitedly. “Here is the note, and a five-dollar bill for your trouble, now begone.”

Jimmy obeyed, and was soon hurrying away in the direction of the candy-shop of Edith Yates.

The shanty in which the shop was located stood alone by itself, not being immediately connected with any other shop. A door opened from the invalid’s room into the vacant space at one side of the building.

To this door Jimmy Flynn crept, when he noticed that Edith was engaged in waiting upon a customer in the store.

The door was open, and he had no difficulty in attracting the attention of the invalid by a gesture of his hand, and silencing her would-be cries by another motion, and a “‘Sh!”

The invalid was not alarmed, evidently, but surprised, and it was little less than a miracle that she kept still. But the sight of the letter was what did the job, and the assurance of Jimmy Flynn’s tongue; at least she did not give the alarm, and was soon in possession of the note, while with six dollars in his pocket Jimmy had hied himself to a restaurant to satisfy the cravings of his inner man.

The time occupied by the event last narrated netted nearly two hours, and brought ten o’clock at night to hand. So that Barry Meredith hardly expected to meet the invalid girl until the next night. Nor was he particularly anxious to visit the confines of the lonely gulch at so late an hour, for the trail had been the scene of many violent deeds done under the cover of darkness, and was also said to be infested by road-agents.

Leaving his hotel, he accordingly visited a gambling-saloon, and amused himself at a game of cards with the first man he came across, who chanced to be none other than Carroll Holly.

But no incident occurred worthy of mention,

and he finally quitted the saloon and returned to his hotel for the night.

Edith was about closing up her store for the night, when sounds of a great tumult came from further up the gulch street. Going to the door, she was quite surprised to see that a great band of horsemen were tearing down into the town, at full tilt. As Edith gazed on in astonishment, a man suddenly darted past her into the little shop.

“Come in and close the door!” he said, authoritatively, drawing a revolver and cocking it. “Do not be alarmed—I do not mean you harm. I’m pursued by those yelling Vigilantes, and you must hide me!”

It was a cool voice, stern in its tone, yet, withal, pleasant, and Edith obeyed more out of respect for the order than from actual fear of the man. She was a brave and plucky little woman and had ever made it a point not to be alarmed until she had reason to be.

The man was tall, wiry, graceful in figure, but looked odd in a suit of black knee-boots, black slouched hat, and a black mask upon his face, hiding all the features, except a firm mouth, a jetty mustache, and a chin that bore signs of character.

He was armed with another revolver besides the one he held in his hand, and a lasso was fastened to his hip.

“Thank you!” he said, gratefully, as Edith closed the door. “Maybe that act will throw the bloodhounds off my track.”

“Who are you?” Edith asked, suspiciously. “Why are the Vigilantes chasing you?”

“Because they want the doubtful pleasure of stringing me up to the handiest tree they come to,” the stranger replied quietly. “My name is Deadwood Dick, they say—perhaps you may have heard of me?”

“Yes, sir, I have read of you in the papers and you have my sympathy,” Edith said, frankly. “I believe if they would let you alone, you would be a better man.”

“Very true, miss. And so long as they crowd me along after the usual fashion, God help me, I will return blow for blow!” the Prince of the Road said, bitterly.

“Where did the Vigilantes find you?” Edith asked, listening to the clatter of horses’ feet and the yelling, out in the gulch.

“Where did they find me?” Deadwood Dick replied, warmly. “Up here in the gulch, I reckon, where I was working in a quartz mine. I got a suspicion that they were after me, and therefore, I slid out. Ha! the devils are halting. Can it be that they saw me enter here?”

“I do not think so. Here is a trap door into my cellar. Drop down there, and I will endeavor to throw them off the trail,” Edith said, quickly raising the trap to admit his descent.

With a grateful glance the chief dropped down out of sight, and Edith carefully closed the trap after him, and skipped back behind the counter.

Not a moment too soon, either, for the next the door opened, and three stalwart men entered the candy-shop.

One was the burly constable of Rough Shod’s little city, Jim Holloway, by name; another was the mayor of the little town, Honorable

Clancy Adair, while the third was a brawny ruffian who attended to the little Rough Shod jail, or "hencoop," as it was familiarly known.

"Good-evenin', mum!" Holloway said, advancing to the counter, while Honorable Clancy and the jailer lingered near the door. "Sorry ter disturb ye, but ye see as how thar's a galoot named Harris, alias Deadwood Dick, slid out o' our sight, som'eres 'ereabouts, and I kinder tuk a notion he might be in here."

"Well, you perceive that you are mistaken, don't you?" Edith replied, coolly.

"Well, et don't look as though he was here," the constable remarked, doubtfully. "What do you say about it, mayor?"

"I believe the notorious outlaw is in this shanty," the Honorable Clancy said, with a bold glance at the little shopkeeper. "I believe Miss Yates can tell you just where to find him."

"Perhaps she can, and perhaps she cannot," Edith said, flashing him a glance of defiance. "At least, you can depend on it you won't learn anything to your satisfaction from me."

"Well, well, we shall see about this, my pert young miss!" Adair said, coloring, angrily. "Perhaps you are not aware who I am."

"No, I am not, nor do I care!" Edith replied, with spirit.

"But I'll let you know who I am!" his Honor exclaimed, savagely. "My name is Adair, and I am the ruler of this town and all the people in it!"

"I beg to differ with you. You may be able to rule me—you may be able to exercise your power over helpless women or a pack of fools who do not know enough to resist, but I can name one you can't rule, worth a cent!"

"Who may that be?"

"His name is Deadwood Dick. Smarter men than you have tried to cope with him but failed utterly."

"You shall see how *I* will not fail!" the mayor growled. "Come! I have no time to palaver with you, young woman. I want to know where you have concealed the outlaw, and that at once."

"Then all I have to say is that you must find him as best you can. I am not at present engaged in hunting up road-agents, as you probably know, and I do not propose to enter the profession so late in life. If you have any idea that Deadwood Dick is in my shanty, you are at liberty to search it!"

"Then go on, boys, and search the place, and don't be too particular about handling things with care. The law recognizes no obligations to anybody, you know," the Honorable Clancy said, with a brutal laugh.

Accordingly, Holloway and the jailer, McAdams, set briskly about searching the shanty, and adhering to the principles held up by the mayor of the town, they took particular pains to upset and overturn everything that came in their way.

Edith stood behind her counter, with pale face and flashing eyes, her indignation too great for utterance.

Everything that could have contained a mosquito was examined, and then the searchers invaded the next room, which was occupied by

the invalid sister of the little shopkeeper, and was used by both as a sleeping apartment.

"Hello!" Holloway exclaimed, in amazement, as he saw Minnie sitting bolstered up in her chair, with her babe asleep in her arms. "Hyar's another gal, mayor."

"The deuce you say," the Honorable Clancy gasped, taking a peep into the room. "Who is it, anyhow?"

"That is my sister, you villain, and if you or your men dare to disturb her, I shall be under the dire necessity of blowing your brains out!" Edith said, coolly taking a revolver from her pocket and cocking it.

"Leave the gal alone, boys," the Honorable Clancy said, believing that Edith meant business. "But search everything else."

This was done, but no sign of Deadwood Dick was found.

"You see, now, don't you?" Edith said, with triumph. "You've had all your trouble for your pains. Now, then, I shall be much obliged to you, if you will go to work and replace things just as you found them."

"Oh! you would!" the mayor growled. "Here, boys, you haven't examined the cellar yet, and more than likely you'll find him down in there."

Accordingly, the trap was torn open, and with their lanterns, Holloway and McAdams descended out of sight.

Poor Edith now held her breath, in anxiety, for she expected a discovery, and was well aware that it would result in a bloody combat, for Deadwood Dick was not the man to tamely submit if he could fight his way out.

Some time passed—a painful suspense it was to Edith—and then the constable and his aid emerged from the cellar, without Deadwood Dick.

"He ain't there!" Holloway grunted, in a rage. "I reckon we've hed all our trouble fer nothing."

"Yes; all fer nothin'," McAdams growled.

"Ten thousand furies!" Adair swore, in rage. "I believe this accursed woman aided the outlaw to escape!"

"You are at liberty to think what you please," Edith said, defiantly. "You must fix things that you have disturbed, as they were when you came in, and then you can go."

"I'll allow we won't do nothin' o' the sort, mum," Holloway said, insolently. "Ef you run this caboose, as it naterally appears ye do, why ye can set things ter rights jist whenever ye git ready. We wash our hands o' the job—eh, mayor?"

"Most assuredly, we do!" the Honorable Clancy said, with a chuckle. "When we go to housekeeping, my pert miss, just let us know. Adieu, fair lady!"

"Halt! you will be so kind as to respect the lady's wishes, if you please!"

In a clear, commanding voice came this order, from the neighborhood of the door, and gazing around, the astonished trio of outlaw-seekers beheld a tall, well-dressed stranger standing in the doorway, surveying them critically with the aid of a pair of jetty black eyes, and a brace of cocked revolvers.

The eyes were spectacled; the form of the

individual was slightly bent; his hair and mustache were snowy white—in fact the individual was no less a personage than Phineas Porter, the detective.

Edith's heart gave a little leap of joy as she saw him, for his intervention savored that he meant to be her friend.

"Halt!" he repeated, coolly, covering the mayor and Holloway. "I happen to be around whenever anything of this kind goes on, and I generally take a hand in. Now, Mayor Adair, you are the man to set things to rights here, and if you don't, don't blame me for enforcing the power I hold, by shooting you. My name is Porter, at your service—Phineas Porter, Esquire, United States detective. Perhaps you have heard of me?"

"Phineas Porter!" the Honorable Clancy gasped, in amazement. "Impossible, sir. Phineas Porter is in Washington."

"Was, a short time ago," the detective replied, coolly, "but isn't now. Go on, sir, and put this young lady's things to rights, and then I want you to come with me for a little walk."

"Curse you, no! I'll not touch a thing here. You have no right to dictate to me!"

"Nevertheless, I shall assume the right," Porter declared, firmly. "You've run the town *your* way for a while, and now I've a notion that I'll step in and run it *my* way, just for a change. Nothing like dispelling monotony, you know. Come, I give you just two minutes' choice 'twixt putting things to rights and—death!"

And the detective took out his watch, deliberately.

CHAPTER V.

THE TABLES TURNED.

No man of cowardly persuasion was this detective, evidently. He had all of the ingenuity of his profession, and all the vim and courage, too.

Clancy Adair had heard of Phineas Porter as a sleuth and a bloodhound of the law—a man who never faltered or failed in his mission, and he had no reason to believe that this was not the same Phineas Porter.

And the way in which he took out his watch and glanced at it, was more than assurance that he meant biz.

"See here!" the Honorable Clancy cried, in a state of rage and mortification at being caught so cleverly. "I don't want to bother to set this tuff all to rights, and if it will be any object to the girl I'll give her twenty-five cents."

Edith laughed scornfully at the liberal-minded proposal, and the detective shook his head in a decided way.

"You are not dealing with the young lady, Mr. Clancy Adair, but with Phineas Porter, U. S. Detective. If you were to offer me twenty-five dollars, or twenty-five hundred, it would not affect me in the least, for you must restore things to proper order. Go on, sir."

"Curse you, I'll have revenge for this indignity!" the mayor of Rough Shod's little city growled, as he began setting up overturned boxes and jars. "I'll have your heart torn out by the roots, and hung up for sale in the meat-

market, below here. Holloway, you fool, lend me a hand, why don't you?"

"Yes, yer honor, I've got a heap o' inclination an sympathy fer ye," the constable said, with a grimace, "but ye see ther galoot hes got ther drop on me."

McAdams being similarly fixed, nothing was left for his Mayorship but to obey the commands of Phineas Porter. Gall and wormwood was this to his proud spirit, for he ever prided himself on being a man whose greatness could not be eclipsed, and he made it a point to put on a great deal of pompous importance in the presence of the opposite sex, in order to impress them with the magnitude of his being.

Particularly was it his desire to awe the little shopkeeper into respect and submission to his will, and finally propose marriage to her; for he had long been cognizant of her prettiness, and secretly set her down as the future Mrs. A.

But was not the present mortifying position likely to cause the pretty shopkeeper to regard him with the contempt and disgust he really merited?

He rather thought it would, and waxed wroth accordingly.

He however restored everything to perfect order, under the detective's orders, and finally finished, with a sigh. A relief was it to be through, for housework did not particularly agree with him.

"You have done well," the detective said, coolly, "and you must now go. On second thought I will not accompany you, but will see you later."

With a nod to Holloway and McAdams to follow him, the crestfallen mayor left the shop with a fearful curse upon his lips.

"Oh! I thank you very much, for interfering in my behalf," Edith said to the detective, when they were gone. "If it had not been for you, I should have had to restore things to order, myself."

"You are under no obligations to me, miss, as I took a hand simply in the behalf of justice."

"Are you a friend, then, of Deadwood Dick, the outlaw?"

"No, not his friend, although I believe him more sinned against than sinning," the detective said, thoughtfully. "He is, however, your friend, and an ardent one, too."

"My friend, sir? Why, I never saw him until to-night."

"That matters not. He has seen you, and has been studying you when you little dreamed of it. Should trouble ever beset you, Deadwood Dick will be among the first to come to your aid."

"Indeed, I cannot imagine why he should," Edith said, "although I should be grateful for such a service. He came in here and hid in my cellar, to-night, but when the Vigilantes came to look there for him, he was gone."

Phineas Porter laughed, coolly.

"Just like him," he said, shrugging his shoulders. "I've known him to slip through a crack where a mosquito could hardly have followed him. In fact it is hardly worth while for any one to try to catch him, for he is as slippery as an eel."

"I am at least glad the Vigilantes did not find him."

"Yes; they would have made short work of him if they had once got a firm hold upon him. But that they are not likely to get, immediately. Before going, Miss Yates, I want to post up a little notice in your store, where it may catch the eye of some of your customers."

And taking a roll of paper from his pocket he unfolded it and soon had it tacked up on the wall.

It was printed in large, bold type, and was likely to attract attention wherever posted, from the fact that posters of its size were seldom seen in the little city of Rough Shod. It read as follows:

"FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS REWARD:—The above reward will be paid for the arrest or capture, alive or dead, of Algernon Ashton, *alias* Spotted Sam, *alias* Endon Revere, *alias* Barry Meredith, who on the tenth day of last March foully murdered his bride of a day, and his bride's parents, and who from them stole eight thousand dollars, and fled to parts unknown."

"The above will be paid at the Capitol Treasury, Washington, D. C., or by any government detective."

This then was the explanation to what puzzled Edith so.

"I will now bid you adieu," the detective said, raising his hat. "If you are of a money-making turn of mind, you may be the very one to claim that reward."

Edith read the document over and over, wonderingly after Phineas Porter had gone, her eyes flashing when she read the name of Barry Meredith enumerated among the aliases of the notable criminal."

"Barry Meredith a murderer!" she gasped, whitening, "and in this very town, too. Ah! now is a chance to revenge myself for poor Minnie's wrongs. To deliver him up to justice shall henceforth be my aim."

A short time previous to the date of our story, there had appeared in the vicinity of Rough Shod and Leadville a notorious gang of outlaws and roughs called the Archangels.

As a band they were leagued together, a wild, lawless set of fellows, bound as one in an oath of blood. Each member was sworn to strike for his brother, enter into all his brother's plans, and to protect his brother from the law. Desertion was punishable with instant death, and no one was admitted who had not stained his hand in human blood.

Their platform truly was a terrible one—their deeds were dark and many.

Moreover, the Archangels, as they had named themselves, were an invisible band, in one sense of the word, for they confined themselves to the night for their depredations, and were seldom seen, and then only with dark crape vails tied over their faces.

More feared were they than all the road-agents in the mountains, for their crimes were not as a rule committed for plunder, but emanated from a thirst for revenge upon an unoffending public.

Their stronghold was said to be not many miles from Rough Shod, but as yet the little

gulch town had not experienced much trouble from these *Vailed Men of the Colorados*. Evidently they had more grudge against the citizens of Leadville, for many dark crimes and outrages had been committed near that place.

That the Archangels were composed of many men of wealth and influence in the mines, was never once suspected, until a poor fellow had been found dying by a mountain trail, one day, who made the declaration with his last breath.

From that time on the band had become more notorious, and many snares were laid for them by the ever-watchful Vigilants, but without any success whatever.

On the morning after Deadwood Dick's escape from the Vigilantes, Barry Meredith paid a visit to his Honor, the self-styled Mayor of Rough Shod.

The Honorable Clancy Adair was engaged in sampling a bottle of liquor, while he perused a Leadville morning paper. He stared hard as Meredith entered and seated himself with as much freedom as though he were lord and master of the mayor's quarters.

"Ah! good-morning," the younger man said, with a nod. "I thought I'd catch you at home, if I put in an early appearance. I dare say you do not recognize me?"

"Very correct conclusion—I do not," the other said, coldly.

"How time affects one's memory," Meredith continued, a tinge of sarcasm in his tone. "Years ago, when you were my affectionate parent, I would not have supposed you would ever forget your dutiful son."

The mayor started, and uttered a profane exclamation.

"You—you Victor!" he gasped, starting to his feet.

"I'll allow that I'm that same," Meredith replied, coolly. "Shake, old man!—what! you won't?"

"Bah! get away with greeting foolery," the other growled, sinking back into his chair. "Where did you come from?"

"Latest from Leadville. Was forced to skip out to save my neck."

"What now? In trouble again?"

"Yes, as a matter of course. For instance, here is a little document I picked up in the street, as I came along."

And the younger villain handed the older one a bill which was like the one Phineas Porter had posted up in the candy-shop.

Adair read it over and over, without any particular evidence of surprise.

"Well?" he finally said, interrogatively, "how much truth is there in it?"

"Heaps," Meredith said, laconically. "I'm the very party wanted."

"And you are guilty?"

"Undoubtedly. Justice, you know, never fails in suspecting the right parties."

"I don't know about that," the Honorable Clancy said. "I've known cases where justice has suspected me of being in the wrong when I was not."

"That may all be, but I'll guarantee that the Government has not made a misfit in my case," Meredith said, with a cool laugh.

"Why did you commit the crime?"

"For divers reasons, main among which was the fact that I cared a great deal more for the eight thousand, than I did for the bride and her family."

"Victor Adair, you are a villain!"

"Clancy, my sire, you were always wont to say, years ago, that I was a chip from the old block!" the younger replied.

While the Honorable Clancy Adair chuckled.

"Well, well, I'm not going to deny it, yet!" he responded. "I'd rather you'd be a felon than a fool, as the saying goes, for it takes a smart man to be a felon, which reflects more credit upon your sire."

"Ha! ha! ha! pretty good, old man. I see you have not lost all your spice yet. What are you up to here in the mines?"

"What should I be, indeed, except mayor, sir?" the parent grunted, swelling with importance at the position he held. "You know, Victor, I would accept nothing lower, for love or money."

"Perhaps not," Meredith—as we shall still continue to call him—said, "though somehow there comes stealing softly over my memory like a zephyr of springtime, a recollection of halcyon days, when Clancy Adair, with the 'ould sod' still clinging to his boots, whiled away his time with many others in grading upon a new railroad, while little Patrick, later renamed Victor, from the sire's 'riverence' for Victoria, trotted along and picked up and chewed the stubs of cigars that the gang-master had thrown away. Ha! hum! times have changed since then, my royal sire!"

"Yes, you fool. I thought your memory had slipped over that period of your existence. For Heaven's sake, don't give it away in Rough Shod."

"Never fear. I came here under the name of Meredith, which has been popular with me for a year or so past, but I have discarded that, since finding that there is a detective in town looking for me, and here I am in your presence, ready for any amount of parental advice."

"What do you expect me to do?" the Honorable Clancy asked, meditatively.

"Oh, rig me out with a disguise, and another name. You see it isn't safe for me to step outside as I am!"

"Well, I suppose I might as well help you out of this scrape, but beware! I shall not help you out of the next. There in the corner is a box containing wigs and false beards. All you have to do is to cut off your hair and mustache and don them, and your disguise will be complete with the exception of a change of clothing, which you will find in the same box. I use the outfit for masquerading sometimes, and will lend it to you until you can purchase one at the store."

"Thanks, most noble sire. I hasten to lose myself, as I am not fond of lynch picnics, you know," Meredith replied.

He first helped himself to a swig from the Honorable Clancy's bottle, after which he seized a pair of shears, and sheared off his hair and mustache.

Selecting a long, full beard from the mayor's assortment, he donned it, and also a false wig to match; then a change of clothing followed, and

he finally stood so cleverly disguised that it must have been a sharp pair of eyes that would have recognized him as the Barry Meredith who had entered the cabin a short time before.

"The disguise is good," the Honorable Clancy said with a nod. "If you do not betray yourself, I am of the opinion that you can successfully effect your escape from the town, and your foes."

"But I do not intend to tear myself so abruptly away," Meredith said, coolly. "You are a big gun here, and can introduce me to all the notables, carry me around town on your arm, dine me on champagne, and in fact I can be a son of a gun to you."

"Confound it, I don't want you around. You always were a blunderheels, and you'd be sure to get me into a scrape through your pranks."

"Never fear, my royal parent. I'll be as dutiful as a pet lamb to you, and even assist you in any villainy you may have afoot."

"Then I'll test you at once," the father said, grimly. "There's one man in this town whom I want put under the sod, and if you want the job you can have it."

"Nothing would please me better, Clancy, my nabob. All you have to do is to furnish me with the geographical and lineal statistics of the chap, together with his antecedents and a diagram of his phiz, and I am truly yours to command!"

"Very well. The man I want you to kill is a sporting sort of a chap, and his name is *Carroll Holly*!"

CHAPTER VI.

A CRIME IN DARKNESS.

THE night succeeding was one of most intense blackness in the mountains, except when the moon would occasionally scud out from behind a bank of clouds, for a few seconds, and cast down her sparkles of profuse illumination. But these periodic installments of light were so infrequent that, taken as a whole, the night was one of extreme darkness.

Rough Shod's little town lay gloomily down between the walls of its gulches, quietly reposing at the midnight hour, when from the rear door of the little candy-shop stole a figure wrapped in a heavy waterproof cloak, and carrying some object in her arms—for it was a woman, and Edith Yates's sister, at that.

In the dead of the night, poor deluded Minnie had stolen forth, with her child in her arms, and through all the dense darkness was going to meet Barry Meredith, and let him fulfill his promises.

Innocent, guileless Minnie!

Even though she had been basely deceived in the polished scoundrel, she could not believe that he would write her such an affectionate and repenting letter, unless he was sincere. She was so little versed in the wickedness of the world—how should she know?

Her going forth was quite unbeknown to her sister—dear, faithful Edith, who was her protector and supporter.

It was Edith, when the cloud of disgrace came to mar the honor of a happy home, who had

taken Minnie and her babe and fled from home, position, friends and wealth—Edith who had bowed her head to a father's curses and a mother's indignation, and with the blighted ones, pushed manfully for the West.

Edith had been so kind—so kind—and Minnie paused, and gazed back at the shanty, hesitatingly. Was it right to go without Edith's consent?

Was it right to go so slyly, when the poor shop-girl was fast asleep upon her pillow, after the fatigues of the day?

Perhaps not, but then—would she not soon be married to Barry, and thus be lifted from her lowly position, and provided with a name and supporter, thereby relieving Edith of the great responsibility?

Temptation, thou art a deceitful demon, ever holding up a false glamour before the eyes of thy victim! How many lives thou dost ruin—how many souls defile and prepare for an unknown future punishment!

It was temptation that caused Minnie to go on into the darkness, fondly pressing her child to her breast—moving along fearlessly, with eyes expectant, in hope of seeing Barry Meredith coming toward her.

On, on she went, blindly, never thinking of how far she was going, but keeping on, her only thought of Meredith, and how glad she would be to see him, now that he had become a better man.

On—on! The rough little mining town was left behind, and the gulch grew deeper and blacker, and the walls frowned overhead like grim sentinels of nature.

Hark! At last her ear catches the sound of a脚步—then more of them, coming down the rocky bed of the gulch.

"Barry! Barry! is it you?" the young mother cries, trembling half between fear and delight.

No response except the echo of the steps that are coming along the passage of the mountains.

Is it Barry? It sounds like his step; but why does he not respond? Nearer and nearer come the footsteps; and Minnie bends eagerly forward—strains her eyes to penetrate into the darkness.

"Barry! Barry! is that you?"

Never a word comes there back in reply, but all of a sudden there is a deep, fiendish laugh, not far ahead there in the darkness, and the explosion of a pistol awakens a thousand slumbering echoes.

Then, with a scream, Minnie Yates threw up her arms, and fell to the earth, with her babe clasped close to her breast.

The bullet of the assassin had done its deadly work for both the mother and the child.

"Curse her! I killed her at first pop!" a hoarse voice muttered; then out from the darkness a grim form crept cautiously, and stood beside the stricken girl. "Ha! she had the babe with her, and one shot did for both. Good enough! I am now freed and unfettered!"

After peering down a moment into the face of the dead girl, the murderer shuddered, and then skulked away in the darkness, with a horrible chuckle.

While the night slumbered on, as is its wont,

when the elements of nature, and nature's people, are in repose.

Slumbered on; and the storm-clouds passed away from the face of the Heavens, to let the moon shower down her beams upon the earth.

With startling distinctness they rested upon the scene of the murder—upon the white, rigid features of the dead mother and her child where they lay upon the hard, rocky bottom of the gulch.

The hours passed by and the night was waning toward morning, when footsteps resounded through the mountain hallway, and a man approached the body as it lay ghastly in the moonlight.

He started violently, as he caught sight of the spectacle, and paused with a shudder of horror.

"Murder!" he gasped with dilated eyes. "I heard the echo of a shot some time ago. That shot must have been the same that took off this young woman. I wonder who she is? Bears a striking resemblance to the pretty shopkeeper, Miss Yates. Can it be she is in any way related to this unfortunate woman?"

For several moments Carroll Holly—for it was he—stood gazing at the sad sight; then stealthy footsteps sounded near, and he turned to find himself in the grasp of three stalwart men, while a fourth, who was none other than Clancy Adair, stood near by.

"What is the meaning of this, gentlemen, release me at once!" Carroll cried, attempting to hurl them off. But this he was unable to do, for they quickly slipped a pair of handcuffs around his wrists.

"No ye don't, my gay young feller," Hollaway, the constable, said mockingly. "We cotched ye right hayr on the spot, an' you're ther percise game-pigeon we want, you are, my goslin'!"

"For God's sake, you don't accuse me of this crime!" Carroll gasped, horror-struck as the full reality of his situation dawned upon him. "I just came along here and discovered the corpses, not half an hour ago, and was wondering what was best to do when you came up."

"Ha! ha! a clever lie, but it will avail you nothing!" Honorable Clancy Adair said, stepping forward with a triumphant laugh. "Carroll Holly, you are my prisoner!"

"Clancy Adair!" Carroll gasped, as he saw the man. "You here?"

"Ay! I am here," the mayor replied, with demoniac triumph in his tones—"here to arrest and hang you for foul murder. Bring him along, constable, and we will jug him till the termination of the trial."

"This is an infamous plot against me, on your part, Clancy Adair!" Carroll cried, hotly, "and it shall not prosper. You know that I am innocent!"

"No, I do not know it, my dear Holly. If I did, do you suppose I would arrest you? Not by a hanged sight. I love you too much to wrong you intentionally. Shouldn't have known of your bloody deed, had not a stranger come into town, and stated how he had witnessed the murder from a distance, and hastened to town to advise me, that I might give chase to the perpetrator."

"Then what surely have you of my being the

criminal? I told you that I just came down the gulch and discovered the bodies."

"We arrest you upon suspicion. If you are the right party, the man who saw the murder will be able to identify you."

Nothing more was said, but between the constable, and the jailer, McAdams, Carroll was marched away through the gloomy gulch toward Rough Shod.

Into the little town they filed, just as the sun was peeping up from the east and lighting the morning with its warm, cheerful radiance.

People were astir—a crowd was gathered in front of the candy-shop, where Edith Yates stood in the doorway, with tearful eyes.

Many curious glances were turned upon the constable and his prisoner, as they passed up through the main street of the town. Carroll walked with firm step and form drawn proudly erect, as if he were being ushered to a throne instead of a prison cell.

Honorable Clancy paused at the candy-shop to inquire what was the matter, for he had not recognized the dead woman as Edith's sister.

"Matter?" exclaimed one brawny son of the State of California, whose name was Davis—"matter? Why ye see, pilgrim, that Miss Edith, hayr, hez lost her sister, an' she be worrit nigh ter death, an' she be offerin' big rewards ter ther galoot, dead or alive, as will fetch back the missin' 'un."

"I can volunteer a little sad information in the case, without requiring pecuniary compensation!" the mayor then said, raising his hat to Edith. "A young woman and a child lies dead up California gulch, and when I come to remember, I believe the woman is Miss Edith Yates's sister!"

If the mayor had broached the truth of the matter in a less bluff and apparently malicious manner, the result might have been different. But as it was, the shock was precipitated abruptly upon Edith, and she gave a little wail of horror, which ended in a swoon.

"She's fainted," Davis, the Californian, said, catching her as she fell, and then supporting her into the cabin.

"Yes, an' et ain't no job o' yours ter take keer o' her!" California Kate said, stepping forward. "I'll just nuss her, I reckon, an' ef ye want ter do a good turn, ye kin go fetch the bodies—or, still better, see that they're decently buried, an' a prayer sed over 'em. Et won't do ther little leddy no good ter see 'em!"

Rough and rude in her ways, though she was, Kate had a fair stock of common sense, and could sympathize with those who were in trouble.

At her orders, Davis dispersed the crowd from in front of the cabin, and then went after the bodies, and had them buried in a little spot which Rough Shod's fathers had selected out as a cemetery.

Two days passed by.

Edith lay at the verge of death in the rear of her little candy-shop, with California Kate her sole attendant and nurse—a rude but faithful guard to the sick girl. Phineas Porter had been in once or twice to see if Edith was well enough to talk, but had found her slightly deranged,

and very weak. So he would go away again, promising soon to call.

Once, in the dead of night, a knock had come to the door, and on opening it, Kate beheld a masked man standing before her.

He forced his way past her to the bedside of the shop-girl, and watched her long and earnestly. Then, without a word of explanation, he took his departure as mysteriously as he came.

Never had she chanced to know him, but Kate came to the conclusion at once that it was Deadwood Dick.

Carroll Holly was still in prison.

Since his incarceration, he had not seen anybody except McAdams, the jailer, who came twice a day with some edibles, and who refused to be either communicative or to let in any friends of the prisoner.

How many friends he had, Carroll did not know. Certainly not many, for he was almost a total stranger in the strange little city of Rough Shod.

What was to become of him, Carroll had no assurance, but supposed a trial would take place, and Clancy Adair would endeavor to convict him of a crime of which he was not guilty. Conviction meant for him death, unless something should turn up which he could not now foresee.

On the morning of the third day of his incarceration, Clancy Adair was ushered into his cell, and left with him alone, the jailer retiring out of hearing.

Carroll was lounging upon the cot bed with which the cell was furnished, and did not rise upon his mayorship's entrance.

"Well, how do you like your new quarters?" was the first question, and the Honorable Clancy smiled grimly as he took a seat upon a stool.

"I should like them much better if men of your type would keep away," Carroll replied, bitterly.

"Ha! ha! I thought so, and that is why I intruded myself upon your privacy. I knew you would be fond of my company."

"You think to provoke me. We shall see how you will succeed. I can be as stubborn as a mule if I choose."

"I am aware of that. But it makes no difference to me. You are completely in my power, and you shall feel that power to the full extent. I am mayor of this town, and it shall give me pleasure to hang you directly."

"Indeed! Why do you postpone the interesting ceremony, then?" Carroll asked, coolly.

"Oh! I want to give you a fair shake," Adair replied, with a crafty smile. "I believe you would shuffle off with a better grace if you had a fair trial for your terrible crime."

"Clancy Adair, tell me, honestly—do you believe me guilty of that murder?" Carroll demanded, sternly. "Do you have the least thought that I committed the heartless crime?"

"Oh! as to that, my dear Holly, I do not choose to express my opinion fully. You were found in a very suspicious position, and then you were seen to commit the murder, and I argue that the case is very strong against you—so strong that any jury would agree that it was best for you to take an aerial ascension, in order to set an example to other evil-doers."

"Who saw me commit the murder?" Carroll demanded, coolly, for he saw that it was triumph to his enemy when he was not cool.

"A stranger by the name of Stafford—William Stafford. He was coming in late from a northern prospecting tour, and saw you shoot the woman, after having a violent quarrel with her. I described you to him, and he recognized you as identical with the murderer."

"My God, what an infamous plot to ruin me!" Carroll could not help groaning. "But think not, Clancy Adair, that you deceive me. It is all your devilish scheme from the beginning to the end. You doubtless committed the crime, yourself, and watched until I came along that you might foist it onto me. The man you say saw me is a tool of yours, hired to do your bidding!"

"Ha! ha! you shoot your arrows hard, my misguided friend, but can you prove these assertions?" the mayor demanded, sneeringly.

"We shall see whether I cannot prove them, when it comes to a trial," Carroll replied. "I may possibly beat you and get free, and if I do, Clancy Adair, you shall meet me face to face—sword to sword, in the main street of this town, and die by the stroke of my blade as did my father by your poisoned blade. Remember, sir, I have not forgotten my mission of vengeance toward you!"

"Were you loose, I should undoubtedly feel restless, but as you are caged I have no serious apprehensions," the mayor replied, with a chuckle. "I must now tear myself away from you, to make arrangements for your trial. Until I meet you again, I hope you will devote most of your time to divine thoughts, as you will need all the spiritual assurance you can get, when you come to my lynch picnic!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE DETECTIVE AT WORK.

STRAIGHT from the jail to the candy-shop, did the Honorable Clancy Adair go, entering the latter without ceremony, as was his wont. In considering himself the ruling power of Rough Shod's little city, he regarded ceremony in and to others as a useless accomplishment—one of the lost arts, in fact.

California Kate was behind the counter, when his Honor entered, dealing out a few cents' worth of candy to a little girl, and surveyed the Honorable Clancy with evident displeasure.

"Well?" she demanded, interrogatively, placing her hands upon her hips, her arms akimbo, "what d'ye want heer, ye old bloat?"

"Me? an old bloat, woman? What do you mean by your insulting address?"

"Jest w'at I sed, perzactly. You're an old bloat, a blackleg, a villain, a cut-throat, and a ruffian, an' I can lick you quicker than a cat ever chawed saltpeter. Miss Edith don't want ye around heer, an' I know it, an' so you can jest git up an' dust as soon as ye please!"

"Very well. I intend to go as soon as I please," the Honorable Clancy replied, with a grim chuckle. "I came to see Miss Yates, and not you!"

"Oh! ye did, didn't ye?" Kate growled, as grimly as her confronter. "Ye did cum ter

see Miss Edith, an' ye didn't come ter see me, eh?"

"I came to see Miss Yates, on important business concerning the murder of her sister. You will be so kind as to tell her I am here!" Adair said, with austere sternness.

"I dunno if I will or not," Kate said, deliberating. "I reckon et ain't no good you intend ter do the gal, you mean soft-soap hypocrite, an' I opine she don't keer ter see ye!"

"But I will see her!" the mayor averred, hotly. "I will see her, and the woman never lived as can stop me!"

"Bet you two ter one now ye lie!" the girl cried, triumphantly, and up from behind the counter she suddenly brought a pair of cocked six-shooters and aimed them at the mayor. "Ye see I hold two tricks and ye ken't find one, don't ye? Now, budge the ninety-nine part o' an inch an' I'll salt ye, sure's my name's California Kate!"

The Honorable Clancy uttered an oath.

"Cuss you!" he growled. "Put up those tools. They're too dangerous to play with. I cave. But I want to see the girl."

"Can't help it. She don't like ye fer a cent, an' I'm goin' ter respect her wishes, you bet your boots."

"But, listen. I'll give you five dollars if ye'll let me see her."

"Keep your money. I ain't no returnin'-board ner no lawyer, an' ye can't buy me, oh! no."

At this juncture, the door of the inner room opened, and Edith stepped out into the shop.

She was looking very pale and ill, with all the roses fled from her cheeks, and a wild, restless expression in her eyes. She was attired in a pretty wrapper, belted at the waist with a red ribbon, and her hair was combed back and fell in a careless wave over her shoulders.

She was so changed that Clancy Adair was startled.

"My dear Miss Yates, you are not looking sufficiently strong to leave your bed," he said, handing her a chair, which she, however, declined. "I should advise you to keep quiet a few days longer, until the bloom creeps back to your cheeks. Your loss has been a sad one, but I come to let you know that we have caught the murderer, and after a merely formal trial, I promise you he shall pay the full penalty of the law for this unseemly crime."

"You have the murderer?" Edith repeated, in surprise. "I supposed Barry Meredith had long since escaped."

"Barry Meredith, ma'am?"

"Yes, Barry Meredith, for it was he and none other who struck Minnie's death-blow."

"Ah! but you are mistaken, Miss Yates. Although I do not know who this Meredith you speak of may be, I am confident you have misjudged him, for the murderer's name is Carroll Holly. He was seen to commit the crime, and was captured at the scene of the murder."

Edith started.

Carroll Holly the murderer? She could not believe it, upon the Honorable Clancy's assertion, for the young sportsman did not appear like that kind of a man. She had inquired and learned his name, after his visit to her store—

she had been more favorably impressed with him than any man she had ever met in Rough Shod.

That he, a total stranger, should be the assassin of her sister, whom he had never seen or known, seemed incredible—beyond belief.

"I do not believe it!" she said. "Mr. Holly is a stranger here—never saw or knew my sister, and it does not look reasonable that he would kill a person he had no grudge against. On the other hand Barry Meredith was our bitterest enemy, and no doubt did the bloody deed."

"Sorry that I cannot agree with you. Holly was seen to kill your sister, my dear Miss Edith. Surely you must believe such evidence as that."

"But I don't, all the same," Edith asserted, stoutly. "I have my belief and no amount of evidence to the contrary could change it. You seem to take more than ordinary interest in having this man adjudged guilty, sir. Perhaps he is some warm particular friend of yours!"

There was a sarcastic taunt in the girl's tone that caused the Honorable Clancy to wince.

"The prisoner is nothing to me, more than a stranger, Miss Yates," he replied, with forced calmness. "I took interest in the case on your account, but I perceive that my interest is unappreciated by you."

"Humph! Ef et was my case, I'd h'ist you outen the shanty on the toe o' my boot!" California Kate put in, contemptuously.

"I appreciate your attention as far as is practicable—no further," Edith replied coldly. "When does this trial come off?"

"This afternoon, at three o'clock! It will not be exactly necessary that you should attend, you are so feeble."

"I shall be there, nevertheless, and endeavor to clear Carroll Holly," Edith replied with spirit. "He did not commit the crime, I am well satisfied, and if he hangs for it, he will die innocent."

The mayor then took his departure, inwardly cursing himself because of his failure to enlist Edith's feelings against Carroll Holly. Not so sure now, was his honor, which way the jury might decide.

After he had gone, Edith donned her hat and pretty opera shawl, and tripped down the street, even though each step cost her an effort, so weak she was.

The first place she visited was the hotel where Phineas Porter stopped. It was he she had come expressly to see, and she found him sitting upon the veranda, smoking a cigar.

He was not wearing the odious goggles now, and she noticed a really beautiful expression in his eyes as he rose with a smile, to greet her, which was by far too young for a man of his years.

"My dear Miss Yates, it is a pleasure to see you up and about once more," he said, pleasantly. "Did you wish to see me—that is, on business?"

"I came to see you for a few moments' private talk," Edith replied, quietly.

"Then come into the ladies' parlor, and I will be at your service!" Porter replied, gallantly, as he led the way.

Edith accompanied him, and was shown to a

seat, while the detective leaned against a mantle, and readjusted the goggles before his handsome eyes.

"I came to see you," Edith began, "concerning the murder of my sister and her babe."

"Ah! yes. I called upon you, but you were unable to talk, so that I could say nothing. What is your opinion in the matter, Miss Yates?"

"My opinion is that they have got the wrong man," Edith replied. "Mr. Holly never committed the murder."

"What reason have you for believing this?"

"One reason is the fact that neither my sister or myself ever saw the man until he came to my shop a few days since; of him we knew nothing, nor do I now."

"Well, that is one pretty good reason. In law it would serve, if Holly was found guilty, to fetch up an argument that he was insane," the detective said, smiling. "It is popular nowadays to make a criminal out insane, whether he is or not. I, too, am of the opinion that Holly is innocent, albeit Adair is ready to offer evidence that he was seen to shoot the girl."

"I know. He evidently has a grudge against the prisoner which he intends to wipe out now that he has an opportunity. I have no faith in that man, sir."

"No more have I. He is an unprincipled villain at heart, in the guise of a lamb. Whom do you suspect of the foul deed?"

"Barry Meredith—or at least, a man we have always known by that name. He deceived my poor sister, in Chicago, under the promise of marriage, and then deserted her. The night previous to the murder, I received a letter from him, asking permission to come and see Minnie. I wrote back a blank refusal, and that was the last I heard of him. But I firmly believe that he lured my sister from my home, and murdered her, for he seemed to hate her after he had accomplished her ruin!"

"Ah! this throws another light upon the subject!" Phineas Porter said, taking out a handsome gold watch and noting the time of day. "We have several hours to work on, before the trial takes place. In what manner did you receive this letter from the man Meredith?"

"It was brought to me by an Irish boy named Jimmy Flynn!"

"Ah! yes. I have seen him. I will at once hunt him up, and see what he knows about the matter. If he knows nothing bearing directly upon the case, I think it will be easy to acquit Carroll Holly of the crime."

"I hope so, for I hate to see an innocent man punished, and such I am sure Carroll Holly is," Edith Yates replied. "And if you can accomplish his release, you shall be well rewarded."

"Never fear that I shall ask for pecuniary remuneration for my services, Miss Yates!" the detective replied, earnestly. "I never charge for my aid to ladies, especially where they are young and charming as yourself."

"There! do not descend to flattery, sir. I abhor it. The true detective will work as well for the homely as the handsome," Edith replied, rising and adjusting her wraps.

"Truthfully spoken, miss, and I assure you that your case shall receive my earnest at-

tion!" Porter replied, as he followed her to the door. "You will try to be present at the trial?"

"I will be there, sir."

And bowing gracefully, Edith took her way back to her home, inwardly voting the detective a queer man. A suspicion was gradually entering her mind, which as yet she hardly credited, but which had in it the savor of a startling revelation.

Phineas Porter was a strange man, and a shrewd one, too. No serious undertaking was it to him to seize hold of a case and work it up. After Edith's departure he lit a cigar, and sauntered over to the "Roost" of Captain Sally Savage.

The captain was not present, but Nance presided behind the bar, and graciously dealt him out a glass of soda, at his request. He drank it, and then proceeded to examine the register upon the counter.

"I find the name of Yates here," he said, directly, addressing Nance—"Oswald Yates. Could you tell me if he is in town?"

"Laws, no!" Nance replied, helping herself to a nip of the "cr'atur" from a black bottle. "Thet pilgrim only stopped over night and then staged it on to Leadville."

"Don't know what brought him up in this region, I dare say?"

"I reckon not. He war a cluss-mouthed pilgrim, an' didn't let out his secrets on halves."

Having gained what information he could in this direction, the detective betook himself out into the street.

"The names are the same, and it kind o' struck me the man was Edith's father," he mused, as he strode along.

After a little deliberation he walked along until he came to the town jail, which was a small two-story log building. McAdams the jailer was sitting upon the steps, smoking his pipe, and surveyed the detective insolently as he approached. A thoroughly subjected tool of Mayor Adair was the jailer, and a man not overburdened with scruples.

"Good-morning," the detective said, pleasantly. "Glad I've found you here, for I ran over to see the prisoner, as I am to work in his defense."

"Oh! ye did, did ye?" McAdams replied, impudently. "Well, ye can't see him."

"Cannot see him? Why, pray?"

"Ca'se ye can't. I've got my orders not to let no galoot inside this jail, an' I opine that don't no galoot go in."

"But I must see the prisoner. It is important that I should."

"Don't keer a darned nickel about that, old hoss—ye can't go in thar, nary a time, while Bill McAdams holds the key!"

"I argue different. I am a detective, and unless you admit me at once, I'll arrest you, as I have the power to do, and send you to Washington for trial."

"Sail in. I'll stand ther consequences. I hed orders frum ther mayor not to let no pilgrim in, an' I'll bet two dollars ter a red cent ther mayor's orders ar' sublime, an' no chap don't go in. I'm a man o' my word, every day in the week!"

Phineas Porter glanced up and down the street, and then turning as quick as a flash, he leaped upon the jailer and seizing him in his hands as though he were but a straw, he raised him above his head and hurled him down to the ground with tremendous force. Evident it was that the detective was a modern Samson in disguise, for the extraordinary act seemed to cost him little or no effort.

McAdams struck the ground with a heavy thud, and lay insensible where he fell, the blood oozing from his nose and ears.

"I hope I've not killed the ruffian," the detective muttered, grasping the keys which had fallen out of the jailer's pocket, and unlocking the door to the jail, after which he dragged the inanimate form in from the street. "I guess he's only stunned. It's a hard job to kill a man of his caliber. Now, I wonder if I was seen?"

Evidently not, as there was no commotion in the street, there being but few abroad.

"All right. Now's my time to visit my client, while this poor cuss is quiet. Maybe he'll have civility enough to admit me, the next time I come."

And with a grim chuckle the man of sleuth approached Carroll's cell.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE TRIAL BEGINS.

THE jail was divided off into eight cells, heavily ironed with bars, and floored with stone. In building the structure, these Rough-Shodites had evidently meant to have things safe.

In one of the lower cells Phineas Porter found Carroll, lying upon a little cot bed, and smoking a pipeful of tobacco, which McAdams had descended to sell him, in consideration of the receipt of one dollar.

Carroll nodded carelessly as the detective entered. He had seen him and learned his name and business—was not particularly interested in the man, further than that.

"You seem to be taking matters coolly enough," Porter said, admiringly. "You are evidently not fearful of the consequences."

"Not in the least. Fear rarely lends one an advantage," Carroll replied, coolly. "If I were to sit and bemoan my fate, I would be none the better for it."

"Quite correct there. You are taking a rational view of the case I see, and I'll try and give you a little assurance by saying that we don't intend to let you hang, if we can help it."

"We?" Carroll replied, interrogatively. "Whom may that 'we' embrace besides yourself?"

"In saying we, I included Miss Edith Yates, the belle of the candy-shop below here."

Carroll's face suddenly lighted as he heard the name.

"She does not believe me guilty, then?" he demanded, eagerly.

"She does not," Porter replied. "She is stout in her belief that you are innocent."

"Then I have faith that I shall get out, after all, detective. A woman's faith and a woman's influence are all-powerful motives, you know."

"So they say," the detective replied, dryly. "But I have a few questions to ask you, which

It will be to your advantage to answer. Firstly: did you ever know the deceased?"

"Never even saw her until I stumbled across her body in the gulch."

"Where were you bound so early in the morning, when you discovered the bodies?"

"I was up and off for a hunt. I had started early in order to get into the mountains by day-break."

"Have you ever known this man, Clancy Adair?"

"Yes. He is my bitterest enemy, and upon discovering me by the bodies, he saw a chance to nab me and satisfy his appetite for revenge."

"What grudge does he hold against you that he should wish to put you under the ground?"

"It is a sort of vendetta between our families. Generations ago there was a tithe of relationship between us, and a fortune to be divided. A quarrel was the result between each generation until my father's time, when he declared the hostilities at an end, so far as he was concerned. Still, this resolve did not affect the other side of the house, as my father had inherited a bulky fortune from his ancestors, which Clancy Adair claimed was rightfully his. Consequently he would not let the feud drop, and he insulted my father, then challenged him to fight a duel. They met with swords, and after a few thrusts my father received a slight incision in his breast. This ended the duel, and also my father's life, for the wound began to swell frightfully, and the physicians and surgeons declared that Clancy Adair's blade had been poisoned, and that all efforts to save my father's life would be futile.

"On learning this, my father called me to his bedside, and caused me to swear to hunt this murderer down, and settle the feud either by losing my own life or taking those of Clancy Adair and his son. Then he died.

"I at once went into training under an expert master of the sword, rifle and revolver, and graduated after two years' incessant practice. I then traveled twice around the world, consuming eight years' time, and the sum of half a million dollars in the attempt to find Clancy Adair. A spy of his, I presume, constantly shadowed me, either in person or by telegraph—at least, I never found my man. I finished my last trip a year ago, and since then have been scouring the West, thinking perhaps I might stumble over my game, and I have, at last, in an unexpected manner."

"So I should remark. Adair is a powerful man here in Rough Shod, but I have an idea that we can defeat his little game. I will now go to see another party from whom I expect to elicit more information."

"All right. I am very grateful for your efforts in my behalf, and shall take pleasure in rewarding you. If you see Miss Yates again, beg her to accept my respectful thanks."

After a few more remarks, Phineas Porter took his leave.

In passing out of the jail, he found that the keeper, McAdams, was slowly recovering, but was too stupid yet to know much of anything.

Hurrying briskly along down the street, the detective made inquiries, as he went, after the bootblack whose appellation was Jimmy Flynn.

As a result he presently found the youthful speculator in a gaming saloon, engaged in a social game of seven-up, with a boozy pilgrim from the upper districts, who, though boozy, knew as well how to get a trick as the next one.

Porter beckoned to the young Irishman, and then went into a stall and sat down. Jimmy was soon at hand, with a look of surprise upon his face.

"Was it yer honor as was after wantin' the likes of me?" he said, tipping his hat.

"Yes; come in and be seated," the detective replied. "I want to ask you a few questions."

"Thin go ahead, ef yez plaze, and it's answerin' 'em I'll be, to the best o' my ability, bedad," Jimmy replied, with a business-like precision, as he dropped into a seat.

"Then listen," Porter said, bending forward, and lowering his tone, mysteriously, whereat Jimmy grew fidgety. "I know all, and it is no use for you to attempt to hide anything from me. You carried the paper to the invalid at the candy-shop, which caused her to meet the assassin, and consequently, you are liable to arrest for a part in the crime!"

Jimmy trembled, but did not reply. Phineas Porter had only guessed at the truth of his accusation, but had guessed exceeding straight.

"Tell me—did you not carry the letter to the murdered girl?" he demanded, sharply.

"Faith an' I did, but I didn't know as it would be after fotchin' any harm."

"Who gave you the letter?"

"Faith, I don't know, at all, at all, except that the note was signed 'Barry Meredith,' yer honor."

"Ha! do you think you would know the man, if you were to see him again?"

"Shure, I'd niver forgit him."

"What else do you know about the murder, boy?" the detective asked.

"Shure it's a lot thet I know, when I see'd the murder, meself, an' see'd the murderer, too!"

"By heaven, is this true? Tell me, then—did Carroll Holly commit the crime?"

"Howly Maria, no. He be as innocent as Mrs. McGillicuddy's pig, bedad. It was the same omadhaun w'hat did tha job, as hired me to take the note to tha girl."

"Can you swear to this?"

"Faith, an' I can swear like the devil."

"Very well. You are the very one that I want. You must come to the trial, this afternoon, and swear as you have told me. You shall be well paid for your trouble, and freed of complicity in the affair, too. Will you come, and give in your testimony, my lad?"

"Faith, an' I will," the bootblack replied.

In the mean time, Clancy Adair was not idle. He had mounted his horse and galloped away into the mountain—far up into the rocky fastnesses, where human foot might have never trod, yet where, despite this supposition, a little group of rough cabins stood among the tall, spectral pines.

Men were lounging around on the outside of these cabins—men of more uncouth dress than the surroundings would seem to warrant. More men were digging with pick and shovel in a little rivulet that gurgled down through the

aerial défile, and the whole of these men wore masks.

Apparently Clancy Adair was no stranger in the mountain camp, as his approach did not seem to create any stir—the men simply looked up, nodded, and he passed on, until he drew rein before one of the principal cabins, and dismounted.

A little, wry-looking old man came and took his horse, and he entered. Inside, all was different. The cabin glittered and shone with the splendor of a palace. Everywhere was the rarest old furniture, the softest carpets, and the most magnificent pictures, set off with hundreds of smaller ornaments of great beauty. Seemingly the Honorable Clancy had stumbled into a fairy palace, as compared with the exterior surroundings, but he appeared not surprised, but took a seat.

A man who was seated at a table, reading, threw down his paper, and looked up, interrogatively.

"Well, what's up, now?" he demanded, stroking his beard, which was long, and brown in color.

"A good deal. I want ten witnesses to be at hand in Rough Shod, willing to aid me, if I desire!" the mayor replied, briefly. He then proceeded in his conversation in a lower tone, and the chief of the Archangels listened and nodded assent, occasionally.

At last the mayor arose to go.

"You shall have a band of the Archangels at your disposal," the chief said, following him to the door. "Look ye out that ye don't get them into a fight, for our numbers are not so strong that we can afford to lose a man."

"No need to fear. The friends of Carroll Holly are not so many that they will make any effort to fight for him," Adair replied.

He then mounted his horse and rode away toward Rough Shod, inwardly chuckling over the coming success of his schemes against his feudal foe.

The court-room in Rough Shod, or rather the room in which all the trials—which by the way were few—were held, was a vacant store upon the main street. A few plank seats had been collected within the building, for the accommodation of the prisoners, witnesses and jury, and the audience were usually left to provide for themselves. So seldom was it that any offender was held to answer for a misdemeanor, that the place was unacquainted with such a crowd as came to witness the trial of Carroll Holly for the murder of Minnie Yates.

Long before the hour of the trial came there was a noticeable increase in the population of the town—the little court-room was packed in every available corner, and a great crowd surged outside, in the long gulch street.

Men had come in swarms from the surrounding mountain districts—from Leadville, Ten Mile and Webster; such an attendance had never been known in the annals of Rough Shod—such an interest in the case of a stranger was one of the things marvelous.

Phineas Porter had conducted Edith to the court in time to get her a seat; Constable Holloway and McAdams led in the prisoner, a little

later; last of all came Honorable Clancy Adair, accompanied by his disguised son, and a superannuated pettifogger named Hoonks.

A gem, literally speaking, was this Hoonks, or at least, so he esteemed himself. He was one of those vain mortals with a great amount of self-conceit, and very little brains, who in a civilized community is ever made the butt of much abuse and ridicule. But in Rough Shod's little city he was considered a great legal light—a man among men.

Honorable Clancy took his seat in the judge's box with the air of a man who realized his greatness and superiority over the more common race of humans. "Boss" was he of the town, by common consent, and therefore he was entitled to the loftiest attention the people could bestow upon him. At least, so he imagined.

As he sat in his box, he noticed one thing which caused him considerable uneasiness.

In the court-room were at least fifty persons whom he had never seen before, and a suspicion dawned upon his mind that he might not have played his hand sufficiently strong, if perchance these strangers were friendly to the prisoner's cause.

But it was too late to cry over spilt milk now. Some ten or twelve of the Archangels were present, and he meant that they should swear away the life of Carroll Holly, even if other measures failed.

Hoonks, the people's attorney, arose with a swagger, and opened the case.

"My friends and feller-citizens," he said, pounding the bench with his fist to attract attention—"my beholders and pilgrims, one and all, it gives me pleasure to appear here before you, in the behalf of justice and civil government rights. It is an auspicious occasion, my benign galoots, when it becomes our duty as fellow-men and brothers, to try a mortal fer ther foul crime o' murder. I don't propose ter say much—I am usually a man o' few words. We will heer ther prosecution an' ther defense, an' then a jury shall be chosen to decide ther matter."

Honorable Clancy Adair then arose.

"The prisoner at the bar was arrested by Constable Holloway, who, in company with Jailer McAdams and myself, found him at the scene of the murder. In the prosecution, I have to bear testimony that the prisoner is a stranger in town, and has been suspected of being a thief from the Eastern cities. It is the supposition that he met the deceased, and believing her to possess money, murdered her for it. Fortunately he was seen in the commission of the crime by one William Stafford, who was coming into town. Mr. Stafford will please rise, be sworn, and give in his testimony in a straightforward manner."

The disguised Barry Meredith arose, and was sworn by Phineas Porter.

Edith failed to recognize him in his deep disguise, but the gleam of his eyes caused her a feeling of uneasiness.

"My name is William Stafford," he said, glancing around. "By profession I am a prospecting miner, and the morning after the murder, I set foot in this town for the first time. I had been out all night, traveling to reach this

town, when I accidentally became a witness to the crime. From a distance I saw the prisoner shoot the girl with a pistol, and saw him go and stand over her. I hastened to town, and informed the mayor, who went and arrested him. I recognize the prisoner at the bar as one and the same person who murdered the girl!"

A murmur of incredulity ran through the crowd as the man took a seat, which finally turned into a partial hiss.

Evident it was that the heft of the crowd did not put much faith in the testimony of William Stafford.

"Have you any further evidence to offer against the prisoner?" Porter demanded, turning upon the mayor.

"None, at present," was the reply.

"Very well. I will then endeavor to prove that the prisoner is not the one who murdered Miss Yates, but is the victim of a most devilish conspiracy!"

CHAPTER IX.

OVERWHELMING ODDS—SENTENCED.

"I AM afraid you will be unable to prove that, to the satisfaction of the jury!" Honorable Clancy Adair said, with ill-concealed triumph.

"Miss Edith Yates appears to be your only witness, and she did not witness the murder. Mr. Stafford did."

"We have only his oath for it," Phineas Porter replied, coolly. "One man's oath is as good as another's, unless he can be proven a habitual and confirmed liar. As for witnesses, I have more than Miss Yates's testimony to tender the jury in behalf of the prisoner. Miss Yates, you will please rise and be sworn."

The formula was duly enacted; then Edith gave in her testimony.

"I knew nothing of the murder until I was told of it by Clancy Adair. I awoke in the morning to find my sister not in bed with me, and when I discovered her absence, I was very much alarmed."

At this juncture, Hoonks, the pettifogger, begged to cross-question her, but could not alter her testimony, as was evidently his intention.

Edith then went on to state how she had received a note from Barry Meredith; the relation Meredith bore them as an enemy; her suspicions that he was the murderer, and her conviction that Carroll Holly was innocent of the crime.

"Your testimony is mostly supposition, miss, and does not weigh," Clancy Adair said, with provoking sarcasm. "Sir Defendant's Attorney, we will hear your further testimony."

"Correct!" Porter said, with unruffled calmness. "James Flynn, if you are present, you may take the stand."

Jimmy was present, sure enough, and came tumbling in from the audience, in a manner more lively than dignified.

He was sworn by Prosecuting Attorney Hoonks, and then took the stand.

"Mr. Flynn?" Hoonks began, sarcastically, "what moight it plaze yer honer ter know forinst this case."

"Fot the devil is that your business?" Jimmy demanded, indignantly. "Shure whin Mr.

Porter gets up an' askes me questions in a civil style, I'll be after answerin' 'em to him, but sorry a one 'll I answer ter ther likes av an on-decent spaldeen like yerself."

Hoonks shrunk back amid a laugh from the crowd, for he was no prime favorite in the town—and Phineas Porter arose.

"Master Jimmy," he said, "we should be grateful to hear your evidence in this painful case."

"See that, now!" Jimmy exclaimed, triumphantly. "Tha detective be afther the cut av a gentleman, while the other son of a spaldeen be a cousin to the snakes St. Patrick bounced out av ould Ireland, shure, an' sorry a bit did they come back. Testimony is it ye're afther wantin'? Shure it's mesilf then that be afther havin' a stock av the same."

"The young leddy is ontirely right. Tha prisoner at tha bar be innocent o' ther crime as was Mrs. McCarty's pig av rootin' up tha potaty-patch. Mr. Carroll Holly niver did tha job, an' ef yez'll listen, shure I'll tell yez all I know.

"I be blackin' the boots o' a sweet-scented pilgrim, won day, whin he asked me if I was wantin' av another job. Shure, I told him that I was as long as it was honest, an' so he hired me to take a letter to Miss Edith Yates at the candy-shop. I tuk it an' she sent won back, and shure she told me to be after cursin' him, ontirely. Tha man who signed his name to tha paper, Barry Meredith, he laffed whin I told him about it, an' he thin hired me to take anither note to Miss Minnie Yates, in tha reer av tha candy-shop, without Miss Edith knowin' av it. I asked him if it was all square, an' he sed it was—that it was a love affair, and he was only after gettin' a bug in the ear av his swateheart."

"Did you see the contents of this letter, Master Flynn?" Porter asked.

"Sure an' I saw ivery line av it, and read it in the bargain," Jimmy replied, with a broad grin. "It was after tellin' her how he had wronged the likes of her in the past, an' how he had repented an' cum back to marry her, but her sister wouldn't have him around, and if she (Minnie) would be after comin' out to meet him in the gulch, after dark, he would have a minister ready, an' they'd be afther gittin' married by moonlight."

"Very well; what did you do after you took the note, Master Flynn?"

"Shure I kept a watch on tha eye av tha spaldeen as sint it. He wint to tha mayor's house, tha next day, an' whin he came out, he was disguised so that his own mother wouldn't 'av' know'd 'im. Shure, an' he couldn't daceeve me, an' bel'avin' he was up to some divility, I kept watch av him. He wint into tha gulch that night, an' I follerred him, bedad. Jist as I war catchin' up with him, I heerd a voice call 'Barry! Barry!' an' see'd him pull a pistol an' shoot into tha darkness. Thin I heerd a scream, an' a fall. I tracked him further, an' see'd him go stand beside the body. Thin after sayin' sumthin' I couldn't heer, he cum back to town, an' told tha mayor to send out hands to search for the murderer."

"This youth's story is a most deliberate falsehood, and I order his arrest!" Clancy Adair cried, in passion.

"You just wait till I get through with him!" Phineas Porter replied, coolly.

"Master Flynn, is this assassin in town yet?"

"Shure, an' there he sets, a-callin' av himself William Stafford!" Jimmy replied, pointing to the strange witness.

"Arrest the man at once!" Porter ordered, turning to the constable. "If he is Barry Meredith in disguise, he is also Algernon Ashton the triple murderer, that name being one of his many aliases."

"I protest!" the Honorable Clancy roared, from his stand.

"You be blowed!" Phineas Porter cried. "You are as much of a rascal as he. Constable, do my bidding!"

The man Holloway was no fool. He knew which side his bread was buttered on, to use a figurative expression; he also saw how the tide was turning, and accordingly arrested the strange witness, who submitted to the handcuffs with very poor grace.

At this juncture there was a commotion in the audience, and the herculean proportions of a man of prodigious size became visible as he endeavored to elbow his way through the crowd, while he yelled at the top of his voice, which emanated from no weak pair of lungs:

"Git out! clear ther track! make room fer ther Pet Elephant o' ther Leadville trail—ther great Apoller o' ther Northwest. Beautiful Bill am I, an' I want er finger in this hayr technical pie. Git eout o' ther way, pilgrims, an' give me space to expiate—give me room ter ruminante—give me a chance ter p'int out ther galoot as put er lead ounce inter ther noodle of ther girl up California gulch. I was thar, boyee', war I—Beautiful Bill war thar, an' see'd ther hull fracas, an' don't ye fergit, an' now jest let me see ther sort o' pilgrim as they say did ther job, an' I kin tell 'em ef their almanack calkylations ar' kerect quicker'n a cat ever played ther tune ther old cow died on, on a bull fiddle. Oh! I'm a tearer, I am—a reg'lar ourang-outang of a chap—a Pet Elephant an' an Apoller—ther original model. Hain't much noted fer sweetness o' temper, my festive galoots, ner my ducats don't number up inter ther millions; but when ye cum ter pure, unblemished beauty, I'm on deck, am I—Beautiful Bill ferever! ther purtiest man in seven counties, cl'ar down ter ther f'ith sand, an' plenty o' rock ter spare!"

"An' cl'ar from ther sacred precincts o' Devil's Debouch cometh I, ter gaze upon ther murderer o' the defunct gal, you heer me!"

And with a snort and a prance the giant suddenly came to a pause in front of the witness-stand and took a survey of the situation.

"Look-ee hyar!" he suddenly roared, beginning to tread around like an angry dog—"what do I behold? Two prisoners heer, fer ther send-off o' one mortal gal. Comets an' catapults! What ye doin' wi' thet galoot?"

And the long bony index finger of the giant pointed out Carroll Holly.

"That man is the murderer of the girl!" Clancy Adair averred, rising, with dignity.

"I'll bet two dollars to a chaw o' tobacco, thet ye're a gol-dummed old liar!" the Pet Elephant declared, hotly. "Thet feller a mur-

derer? No sir-ee, bob-tail hoss—not any fer him, an' I can lick ther teetotal socks off ther galoot as sez different!"

"If you saw the crime committed, please tell us, then, who is the right man?" Detective Porter said.

"Who be the right man, did ye say? On course I will, my gelorius son o' Liberty. Thar's the chap thet did ther job—right thar; he who calls hisself William Stafford, an' I'll git up on top o' a stack o' Bibles as high as a meetin'-us' steeple an' sw'ar he's ther very chap—ther precise identical galoot!"

"You hear!" Phineas Porter said, turning triumphantly to Adair. "The innocence of Carroll Holly, and the guilt of William Stafford, *alias* Barry Meredith, *alias* Algernon Ashton, is proven beyond a doubt."

"By no means!" the mayor replied, a greenish glitter in his eyes. "The testimony in this case is not yet all given. Joel Davenport, Oscar Porterine, Jack Finch, Bill Marle, Sam Steele and Alf Moore will please step forward and be sworn."

Six rough-looking fellows instantly stepped out of the crowd and onto the witness stand—men with long, shaggy beards, and faces wherein was not a trace of honesty or mercy.

"I am a miner!" the man Davenport began, loudly. "These men are companions of mine, and we always go together. We were coming down to town, early this morning, when we accidentally came upon the scene of the murder—saw the man, Holly, shoot the young woman with the babe. As we allus mind our own biz, we didn't interfere, but cum on ter town!"

Upon being sworn, the other men corroborated the miner's evidence.

"That will do. So conclusive and overwhelming is the evidence of the prisoner's guilt, that no jury is necessary to decide the case!" the mayor said, with unseemly haste. "I, therefore, by that power vested in me, as judge of the court, the mayor of the town of Rough Shod, do sentence the prisoner, Carroll Holly by name, adjudged guilty of the crime of murder in the first degree, to be hanged by the neck until dead, in front of the public jail in said town, at sunrise, to-morrow morning; also, I do declare William Stafford innocent of the crime, and pronounce him a free man!"

"Hold, William Stafford is my prisoner!" Phineas Porter cried. "I hold papers for his arrest, signed by the Governor of the State. I claim him, and remand him to the jail, to await my further orders!"

"Let me see your papers!" the Honorable Clancy demanded, in a rage.

Phineas Porter handed them up without a demur, and Adair read them several times over, ere he returned them.

"I have nothing further to say," he declared, "when you can prove that William Stafford is your man."

"That can be easily done!" the detective replied, coolly. "See?" and he reached forward and tore the false beard from Meredith's face, and also the wig from his head. "The change reveals altogether another man, and the real murderer of Minnie Yates."

"Barry Meredith, you shall yet hang for

your awful crime!" Edith cried, suddenly towering up in front of the guilty man. "Own the truth, and let Carroll Holly go free, for well you know that he is innocent!"

"I know nothing of the kind. It is I who am innocent!" was the sullen reply.

"Silence. The court is dismissed!" Clancy Adair cried. "Constable, I remand the two prisoners to jail in your care. See that they do not escape, or you will forfeit your life!"

This was the end of the trial.

Both Carroll and Barry Meredith were taken off to jail, and the court-room was soon cleared.

Edith went home alone; Phineas Porter lingered at the court-room until Clancy Adair came out.

"Ha! ha! you played a strong hand, but I held the greatest number of tricks, you see!" the mayor of Rough Shod's little populace said, triumphantly.

"You played a cheating, lying game, too!" the Washingtonian replied, sternly. "I might have outgeneraled you, as it was, but did not see fit to hire men to lie for me. Look out for yourself, yet, however, for I shall have you on your back, and your enemy out of prison, before you are scarcely aware of it."

"Bah! I defy you," was the retort. "You will find that I am boss here, in Rough Shod and all-powerful, too!"

"Your days of power are nearly at an end," Porter replied, soberly, as he strode away in one direction, while the mayor took another.

One man out of all those assembled in the court-room, followed his Honor, and that man the big lumbering Leadville giant, Beautiful Bill. Straight after the mayor the Pet Elephant pranced, and caught up with him inside the Fair Shake saloon. Then, up to Rough Shod's chief magistrate the giant waltzed, and hit him a slap on the back with his big hand, that caused some of the mayor's pompous bearing to wilt.

"Looke hayr, me lord!" Bill roared in tones calculated to inspire his victim with terror—"lookee hayr, me gentle zephyr o' springtime! You're ther very precise galoot we want to see—ther entire inderwidual I wanter interview—I, Beautiful William, ther Pet Elephant o' ther Leadville trail!"

"Sir, what do you mean by laying a hand upon me?" the Honorable Clancy demanded, angrily. "I've a notion to horsewhip you for your insolence."

"Kerwhoop! ye have, hev ye?—ye've ther darnest notion in ther world ter cowhide ther Pet Elephant o' ther Leadville trail, hev ye? Oh! Jerusalem! Oh! Lordy! somebody fan me quick—some galoot jab a knife into an artery an' bleed me, or I shall faint. Cowhide ther Apoller o' ther Nor'-west, will ye? Oh! me royal lord duke—me zephyr o' Luv among ther Roses! Sail right in—come hug me ter oncet—embrace me wi' ther vim o' a number one grizzly!"

And the giant squatted, and leered frightfully into the face of the mayor. For once in his life, at least, that individual was thoroughly scared. Plain was it that the giant was ripe for mischief, and the dawning fact that his

friends in the town were rapidly decreasing, gave the mayor an extra feeling of uneasiness. Full well he knew he was no match for the giant in a combat, and he trembled as he pictured the consequences.

"What do you want?" he demanded, endeavoring to assume bravado suitable for his station. "What do you want, sir?"

"What do I want, me noble scion of the House o' Refuge—me lord duke? What do ther great Apoller want? Waal, now, ef ye'll lend me yer capacious ear fer about a minit, I'll endeavor ter impress upon yer brain ther natur' o' my wants!"

CHAPTER X.

A CHALLENGE.

AND the crowd listened, and the mayor listened to learn what the man of much mouth and muscle from Leadville could want with Rough Shod's aristocratic official dignitary. No pilgrim ever before, in the memory of the oldest inhabitant had had the audacity to treat the town's supreme magistrate thus familiarly, and the lookers-on were in the ripe spirit to see the mayor's much-bragged-of but never-displayed prowess.

This man from Leadville was no baby to handle, as several of the Rough Shod sports had already learned to their cost, and therefore they deemed it morally certain that he would knock the mayor literally into the middle of the next week.

But, all were surprised, later.

"Tell ye?" the giant roared, after a few moments of head-scratching—"tell ye, me noble jackal? On course I will, an' we'll see ef that's ary a bit o' stuff in ye, wu'th a cent. Ye see, whereas in the course o' hooman events it became necessary ter bend my footsteps toward ther settin' sun, because o' sundry difficulties in Leadville, I struck this town, and next I know'd, pilgrims, I war struck wi' a tremendous gripe in the stomach, which the fisican pronounced ther first pangs o' dawnin' luv fer sum lovely feminine critter. I looked around me, an' found ther gal who hed stole my ace of hearts, an' I popped at her, immegetly. Waal, arfter sum courtin', I concluded ter give her a trial in double harness, but fu'st she must lick the best fighter in town, ter guarantee she were ready ter defend ther great Pet Elephant, in his old age. This she agreed to do on ther, spot, and nominated ther mayor of ther town as her huckleberry. Great camels an' catapults, pilgrims, that gal knows her biz, an' so she sets down an' writes a challenge, an' hayr's w'at it sez:

"**MY DEER MAYOR:**—In the demands o' justice, fer past offenses, I, California Kate, *alias* Kate Savage, do challenge you, Clancy Adair, ter meet me in ther street, wi' ther broadsword or dueling blade, an' fight me till I or you ar' licked, ter our full satisfaction. By admitting yourself ter be an unmitigated coward an' nincompoop, ye can honorably refuse this challenge, but ef ye aspire ter be a gentleman, ye're bound ter cum an' face me. I'll be waitin' fer ye, in front o' ther Roost, at seven, to-night.

"**CALIFORNIA KATE.**"

"Thar, now, how is that fer high?—how's that fer woman's rights and ther next presy-

dent? Kerwhoop! a daisy ar' thet Kate, an' set down in thet presidential cheer, wull she, an' ye bet yer boots on't. An' now, me lord duke, what is yer answer, will ye fight, or will ye crawfish?"

"I'll fight, of course; I never was yet branded a coward!" the Honorable Clancy replied, with dignity. "Tell the woman I will come and cut her accursed head off."

"Kerwhoop! d'ye hear him, pilgrims—d'ye hear him avow his intention o' decapitatin' ther he'd o' my amosity? Oh! zephyrs o' Canaan purfect us—purfect me, Beautiful William, ther Pet Elerfant o' ther Leadville trail!" the giant cried, as the Honorable Clancy turned and strode from the saloon. "Gents, were I ther king o' all this yere yearth—were I a Vanderbilt or a Stewart—war I at ther head o' a railroad corporation, or a whisky bar'l—war I ther richest man, or ther poorest galoot in this yere contynent, I'll be teetotally bathed in mustard-plasters an' unhealthy eggs, sandwiched wi' limburger cheese and old bi'led owl, ef I'd trade my chance fer life wi' ther mayor, you heer me. When I want ter end my earthly pilgrimage, I'll go buck my head ag'in' a mule's hind fut, or I'll smother myself in a ten-cent schooner o' lager, but I be everlastin'ly jiggered ef I'll let thet gal Kate, shave me wi' a broad-sword. Oh! no!"

And with a broad grin, the giant took his departure!

As a thoroughbred villain, Honorable Clancy Adair ranked among the foremost in all Rough Shod. Not only had he the disposition, but he was possessed of a liberal amount of shrewdness, and conception in villainy that was not a gift to other men of his type.

After leaving the saloon, he went straight to the jail, and was admitted by McAdams to the cell of Barry Meredith.

The false witness was stretched out upon the cot bed, fast asleep, but awoke with a start, as his sire entered.

"Oh! it's you, is it?" he grunted, ungraciously. "Well, all I've got to say—you're a wonderful fine galoot."

"Tut! tut! my son," the elder villain said, seating himself. "I was powerless to prevent your arrest. The detective has orders from the Government for your arrest, and I had no right to interfere."

"Well, have I got to stay in this blamed hole, then?" Meredith demanded, dubiously.

"Not long, I hope, my son. When night once more hovers her mantle over Mother Earth, I will see if you cannot be released from your confinement. Until then be of good cheer."

And with this consolation, his mayorship left the jail, and returned to his cabin.

"Now, let me see how matters lay, and how I must scheme to play my hand through," he mused. "There will undoubtedly be a good chance for Vic to attend a hanging ceremony, unless I do something for him. Then, there is young Holly to be gotten rid of, or I shall have more trouble with him. Next comes the girl, Edith Yates. I have come to the conclusion that she would suit me, to replace the former Mrs. Adair. She does not know that I know

that she is the owner of the big mine, which, of course, must come with the bride. It strikes me that I'd better pay her a visit at once, and if I cannot induce her to marry me in the usual way, why, there are other ways."

Eating an early supper, the chief magistrate of Rough Shod's little city spruced himself up, donned his duster, silk hat and kids, and, gold-headed cane in hand, set out for the candy-shop. On his arrival he found Edith behind the counter, and graciously condescended to purchase a cigar by way, as he supposed, of winning her favor.

"Miss Yates," he said, after lighting the cigar, and drawing several puffs, "I came here this evening on business of great importance, and of great interest, I trust, to both you and myself. I am a man of few words, and I cannot perhaps plead my case with as much ardor and high-flown language as a younger suitor, but I can tell you that I have formed an ardent attachment to you, and I have come to offer you my heart, hand and fortune, and ask you to become my bride. Do not say no, for I am not going to listen to a refusal. Mine is an eligible offer, and I will make you the most devoted of husbands, and therefore I beg of you not to say no!"

To say that Edith was surprised at this sudden outburst of loverly passion from Rough Shod's mayor, would be greatly understating the facts of the case—she was astounded.

"Marry you, sir?—I marry you?" she exclaimed, between *hauteur* and laughter. "Why you are nearly old enough to be my grandfather!"

"Ah! my dear Miss Edith, there is where you greatly err," his honor assured, feeling sure that he had already gained one point. "Although time has indelibly left its mark upon me, I am but eight-and-thirty years of age, and right in the prime of manhood. Indeed my heart is just as young as ever it was."

"And as green as cucumbers upon salad, in springtime, sir," Edith replied, with ill-concealed merriment.

"What! Did I understand you right, Miss Yates?"

"I guess you did, sir, and I will further electrify your greatness by telling you that I would no sooner marry you than I would the veriest bullwhacker that you can find on the street. You are a villain, Clancy Adair, and I know not how much worse. You are utterly without heart, principle or respect, and any girl who would for a moment consider a proposal from you, must be very low indeed!"

"Ah! my child, you are young and impetuous, and talk wildly. You do not consider that by marrying me you would be rising in social rank, and pecuniary troubles would be a thing of the past."

"Bah! were every hair in your head hung with diamonds, I'd despise you the same. Go, sir—there is the door behind you."

A fearful oath escaped the mayor's lips. He had not calculated upon such a repulse as this. His vanity had led him to believe that he was invincible, and that all that was necessary for him to do to win the pretty shop-maid, was to ask for her, and she would willingly acquiesce.

But he had made a great mistake, for once, at least.

"Do you then refuse my offer for good?" he demanded, savagely.

"I do, most certainly. Go!"

"Yes, curses on you, I will go, and when I return you shall go with me, willing or unwilling. I have sworn that I'll possess you, and you may rest assured I will not break my oath. I'll get you first, and then tame you afterward!"

And with a malignant laugh, he left the store.

After he was gone Edith went to the door and gazed after him, an anxious expression settling upon her face.

"He is a bold, bad man, and means me harm," she mused. "I fear him only because I am all alone, and nearly friendless. If, as I believe, he is in league with Barry Meredith, he would not hesitate at any crime!"

"Fear him not, lady!" a voice exclaimed, and turning, Edith beheld a man standing within the store—the same she had once hidden from the Vigilantes—Deadwood Dick. "Fear not that man, for in your hour of need Deadwood Dick is on deck. When you least dream of it, he is lurking near, watching for your welfare, with a brother's care, and removing such obstacles, as will be apt to trip you and throw you into the power of enemies."

"And you are Deadwood Dick?" Edith demanded.

"Yes, miss, I have the rather doubtful honor of being that personage," the Prince of the Road replied. "You may remember that I once took refuge in your cellar, to escape the road-agent hunters."

"I remember, yes. But how did you get out of the cellar?"

"Through a narrow window in the rear. It only requires a small hole for me to creep out of, and so I thought I'd better packachee. As it was, it proved lucky that I did."

"Yes. The Vigilantes searched the cellar, and would have caught you."

"Probably. They've a peculiar itching to lay their hands upon me, but it is a desire on their part that I cannot see fit to gratify. The cause of my call to-day, Miss Yates, is to ask you a few questions, which I feel sure you will be willing to answer."

"I can, perhaps. At any rate I will listen to what you ask," Edith replied.

"Which is kind of you," Deadwood Dick said. "I will try not to detain you from your business, long. Some time ago you came into possession of a piece of property called the Duncan mine, in rather a mysterious manner, did you not?"

"I did," Edith replied.

"This property was made a gift to you through a letter, by some party who did not sign his name. Am I not right?"

"You are."

"Very good. In the letter was a clause that if the giver ever saw fit to claim the property again, you were to return it to him, when he presented himself, and exhibited a double cross stamped upon a piece of paper, the paper to exactly correspond in size to a duplicate which was inclosed in the letter."

"Very true. And you have come to claim the mine?" Edith demanded.

"By no means. Although I was the owner, and also the giver, I do not propose to take it back. I have more wealth than is required to meet my demands, and it occurred to me that I might benefit some honestly-disposed person by giving them the Duncan, with the proviso that I could reclaim it, if I chose—which meant if I found them dishonest. I found you toiling here with slim chances for support, and believing you were the right party, I gave you the mine, and further propose to make you the owner by absolute deed."

And as he finished speaking, Deadwood Dick laid an unsealed envelope into astonished Edith's hands.

"But, I cannot think of accepting such a gift, sir—" she began.

But he silenced her by a wave of his hand.

"Say not so, lady. It is yours, freely, to keep and manage. I have no use for it whatever. Were I a free man, and permitted to go among my fellow-men as such, I might need the mine, but I am outlawed from civilization, and as a free rover I have no need for such an incumbrance."

"Nevertheless, now that I know who the owner is, I do not consider it maidenly to accept such a gift from a stranger."

"There is no need for compunctions in this case, miss. I am not quite a total stranger to you, and I flatter myself I am too much of a gentleman to take an advantage of your acceptance of a gift from me. Since I heard of your struggle to support your sister, and your bravery in leaving your home and facing a pitiless world, my friendship for you has not decreased, and as a friend in an hour of need I trust you will ever regard me."

"I certainly do regard you as such, and if I accept your gift, I shall feel under many obligations to you."

"Do not, lady, I pray. Obligations are not the most pleasant things to bear up under—they are the precursors of distress—insolvency—ruin. Obligations and gratitude are two separate and distinct feelings—I'd rather have the true gratitude of one person, than the obligations of a thousand."

"Perhaps you are right. In either case, I shall not soon forget your kindness. When in need of any aid I can give you, I shall be ready to extend you a helping hand."

"Many thanks, Miss Yates. I shall not hesitate to call for assistance if I need it. For the present, I shall lie shady, but shall be around when you are in peril. I must go now, lest some minion of the law take it into his head to look in here for me!"

And smiling, the Prince of the Road fitted a false beard to his face and took his departure.

Edith gazed after him, with a strange looking expression upon her face.

"A road-agent, a robber, an outlaw, and yet a gentleman, for all," she murmured. "If it had been such a man whom poor dead Minnie had centered her affections upon, she would have led a life of peace and love. Oh! Barry Meredith, you have yet to feel the pain you

caused her to feel, and God grant that your sins may not strike upon your conscience, lest the torture be unendurable to you."

CHAPTER XI.

THE COMBAT IN THE STREET.

"MAY I be teetotally hugged to death wi' polar b'ar's, or stunned wi' nuggets o' pure auriferous, ef I'd sell my skin so cheap as will the mayor. Licked, pilgrims?—on course he will get licked, an' don't yer fergit that the fact war impressed upon yer memories by me, ther Apoller o' ther West—ther famous Pet Elephant o' the Leadville trail. A sure prophet in sech matters, am I—an unfallible calendeer o' signs an' astronomical calculations, an' I'll bet any galoot in ther crowd a nugget as big as yer fist, that Kate socks it to ther mayor in a way that'll make his flesh skeerce. Oh! she's a reg'lar war-horse, is my Kate, pilgrims—a two-storied complex catapultian comet, an' don't yer fergit et. An' when she rasps ther conceit outen that ar' chief cook-an'-bottle-washer, ye call ther Honorable Clancy Adair, why that's goin' ter be a weddin' in this yere town, an' every man o' ye can cum an' smell o' my empty tarant'ler jug, that is, ef ye don't git boozy. Ha! heer comes ther gal now—my daisy, Catherine!"

The giant had been addressing a rabble of men and boys who had congregated in front of the "Roost," and as he spoke, California Kate came from the interior of the building, equipped for the duel.

She was now dressed in a semi-male suit, consisting of breeches, knee-boots, and a frock that nearly met the top of her boots. Upon her head she wore no covering whatever, and her hair fell unconfined over her shoulders.

A belt was secured to her waist, which contained a handsome sword; another scabbard held a slim rapier.

"I am ready!" the girl said, quietly, as she turned to Beautiful Bill. "Where is the man you want to engage me with, sir?"

"Whar is he, me Catherine, my holly-hock—whar is ther specimen o' hoomanity? Waal, neow, he ain't cum yet, but I reckon he 'll be along, soon. Sayeth he to me, 'I will come and cut her cussed head off,' and I'll bet high ther galoot do cum, even ef he gits licked clean out o' time."

"The mayor is coming," a miner said looking up the street, "an' he looks b'ilng mad."

"Let him b'ile. I'll bet two dollars, Californy Kate takes all ther b'ile out o' him in less'n five minutes by ther turnip. Oh! I'm a bettin' man, am I, and ary a galoot as wants ter buck ag'en' fate an' fortin' can hev an open opportunity fer ter inwest. Beautiful Bill am I, an' I can steal an' hide more tricks in a quiet game, than ary other rigged schooner-launcher in ther town."

But no one had any desire apparently, to bet with the notorious mule-driver from Leadville. He had already established his reputation in Rough Shod as a "bad man," and those were scarce who would care to get into an engagement with him.

More eager was the assembled crowd to witness the forthcoming duel between the girl gladiator and the chief magistrate of the little town.

All through the mountain mines, California Kate had the reputation of being the best fencing-master to be found. While of the mayor's prowess with the shining blade, the crowd was ignorant. Never had they seen him engage in a conflict, and therefore the general judgment was that he would get "licked."

In a state of terrible wrath was he as he strode up. His eyes were red and gleamed savagely, and his face flushed from copious draughts of liquor which he had taken to steady his nerves.

"Where is this woman that sent me a challenge?" he cried, glaring around with unaccustomed fierceness. "Show me the she-cat, at once?"

"My royal Napoleon, allow me to present you!" Beautiful Bill exclaimed, and seizing the Honorable Clancy's arm, he half-dragged him toward the spot where California Kate was standing. "Thar she is, beloved ace o' hearts—that's ther gal ye're ter take yer first degree in masonry from. Oh! but, mayor, she will lam it to you beautiful, will my gal Kate—she'll cut ye up inter sirloin stakes afore ye can spit a stream o' terbaccy-juice over yer under jaw, an' I'll bet two ter one on't. A critter o' ther crack breed ar' that Kate, you bet. Pile a pack o' Bibles one on top o' t'other es high as ther summit of old Grizzly's hoary peak, yander, an' up 'em I'll go, an' standin' on ther e'ena'most top, I'll wave my old slouch hat, shout housanners, an' sw'ar that Kate's gud fer twenty sech galoots as ye, beloved pilgrim!"

"Oh! it's you, is it?" the Honorable Clancy ejaculated, when he saw the girl gladiator. "And you are the woman that sent the challenge?"

"I reckon I'm ther same," Kate replied, with a grim chuckle. "I sent ther challenge, and I reckon I'm ready to back it up, every time."

"Pshaw! why fight? 'Tis folly, and I guess we can compromise the matter," his honor said, in a low tone. "Come, what do you say?"

"I say no—*nix cum a rouse!*" Kate replied, coolly. "Ye see, I and Beautiful Bill hev made a bargain ter show him I'm competent to hoe my own row. No, sir-ee, my dear mayor, you've either got ter toe the scratch or acknowledge here before the crowd that you're a coward and a sneak."

"Never will I acknowledge a lie!" the mayor cried, angrily. "If fight you want, fight you shall have, and without mercy, too! Woman though you are, you shall feel the heft of my hand when I strike your death-blow!"

"Correct!" the girl gladiator said, quietly. "Square yourself, and if I cannot defend myself, you are at liberty to mow me down. Gentlemen, a ring, if you please."

A ring was instantly formed, the crowd forming its margin, in dense masses.

An eager crowd were they, too—eager to see two humans fight for their lives—ready to cheer the victor, whichever that might be. A people as wild and rude as the rugged mountains around them, they saw no special sin in this "innocent" sport, in which each combatant had an equal chance. Death was but a commonplace occurrence—murder was less than a seven days' wonder.

The mayor threw off his jacket and vest, and

rolled up his sleeves, like a man who was preparing for a hard day's labor. While California Kate merely threw her hat up into the air, and caught it on her head, thus adding to, instead of decreasing her apparel.

Cool as an iceberg was she, seemingly, while her opponent was agitated. Nervous—doubtful was he what would be the result of the contest. Nothing of the principles of sword-practice did he know, but he hoped on the strength of his arm that he could get in one disabling blow upon the girl, after which it would be easy to follow up his advantage.

"Git ready, mayor, me darlint!" the mule-driver cried, prancing about in delight. "Squar' yerself, an' annoint yer j'nts, fer ye'r' about ter buck ag'in' a consarned 'arthquake. An' above all, say yer catechisms afore ye engage ter lick Catherine, fer ye'll never hev a better opportunity. A playful kitten be thet ar' gal, an' she may play wi' ye at first, but she's bound to lay ye out, on ther humstretch. Hain't got nary a connection wi' ther coffin trade, nuther, altho' she is sed ter be interested in sellin' lots in a new cemetery."

"If you will keep your mouth shut, sir, I shall be greatly obliged," the Honorable Clancy growled, as he seized his sword, and examined its edge.

"Keep my mouth shet! Ha! ha! thet ar' a moral impossibility, my dear sir. Ter keep my bread-trap hermetically sealed would require tons o' glue an' por'us plasters, ter say nothin' o' quarts o' mucilage an' other gumstickem. No, sir, me noble duke, et is a teetotal impossibility!"

"Choose your second; Beautiful Bill will act as mine," California Kate said, "and the crowd will be umpire. Be lively, now, for I've got another critter ter lick after I get through with you."

In vain Honorable Clancy looked around for a man whom he could call his friend, but there was not one present. All were miners whom he had in some way wronged during the period of his rule in Rough Shod, or else were total strangers, whose looks were not sympathetic, at the best.

"Let the second go!" he growled, finally; "I will play fair, and you do the same."

Accordingly they entered the ring and approached each other.

Kate was cool, composed, watchful. Adair was nervous, agitated, doubtful.

"Git reddy, now, me jocund zephyrs," Beautiful Bill cried, from his position at the right hand side of the mayor, where he half-crouched, with a pair of huge navy revolvers in hand, all ready-cocked for business—"get reddy, my hilarious hotspurs, an' when ye heer ther clarion notes o' Beautiful William, Apoller o' ther Nor'-west, sing out in dulcet strains the word 'three,' why jest sail right in ter each other, in ther latest approved style. One—two—*three!* ther rooster crows and away she goes!"

At the given signal, the contestants crossed blades, and the duel had commenced.

Strange was the spectacle there in the main street of the little mining-town, beneath the gathering shadows of early evening—strange to see a man and a woman battling with each

other for victory, and the victory to be decided by death.

With a strange, breathless eagerness, the Rough Shodites looked on. Never before had they witnessed a similar scene, although this was not the first time the girl gladiator had wielded the sword within the very town, on wagers of money or for the championship.

But such encounters had previously taken place in the sort of theater in the rear of her father's "Roost."

Clash! clash! went the glittering blades of steel as they met, the ring resounding strangely upon the evening air. For the first five minutes the game was pretty evenly divided between the contestants—it was thrust and parry, feint and foil, and the mayor held his own, to the surprise of the excited audience.

But at last Kate began to warm up to her business, and scored a cheer by hitting her opponent a terrible slap on the cheek with the flat of her sword. It was a stunner, and staggered the mayor, and elicited from him a howl, but he succeeded in maintaining his equilibrium.

"Kerwhoop! warn't thet a daisy, pilgrims—warn't thet a huneysuckle, tho'?" roared the giant, prancing about, nearly beside himself with delight. "Oh! Kate, my gelorous sugarplum, I love ye fer thet ar' stroke, I do frum ther bottom o' my heart. Never did I see a thing did more skientific, since Noaher entered the ark. Give him anuther, my nugget o' pure a'riferatum—sock et to him, ef ye want ter transport ther great Pet Elephant wi' actooal joy!"

Whatever might have been the eccentric girl's desire in this direction, she continued the amusement by reversing the order of things, and slapping the mayor upon the other cheek, thereby calling forth another howl of pain and rage from Adair.

"Catapultian comets frum Jupiter!" the giant roared, his satisfaction knowing no bounds. "Oh! glory hallelujer! Sumbody fan me wi' their boot, or I shell bu'st, by thunder. Jes' luck at ther gal, will ye, my feller-citizens—jest unfurl yer optics an' glue 'em onter my affianced, and see her lam it to thet nabob, will ye? Behold her give him ther toothache as mortal pilgrim nevyer hed it, before. Oh! oh-o-o-o-o!"

And the big mule-driver laid down in the middle of the dusty street, and rolled and yelled and kicked, while California Kate continued her lightning and novel sword-play.

Red as a turkey gobbler's were the mayor's fat cheeks growing, and he found himself like a child in the girl gladiator's hands. Slap! whack! smack! the flat of the sword hit him upon either cheek in rapid succession, each blow eliciting a yell of pain—each blow making his face ache the harder, until the pain grew unendurable, and dropping his sword he made a dodge beyond the reach of her arm. To take advantage of a gap in the crowd was but the act of a second's time, and then away down the street the mayor sped, as fast as his legs would carry him, amid hoots of derision from the crowd.

Not a whit cared he for these yells, however—his only thought was to get away alive, and out of the reach of the girl gladiator.

Down the street he rushed on, never pausing to look back, but keeping on with the perseverance of a race-horse, pursued by a half-score of barking, yelping curs that had been attracted by the extraordinary street spectacle. Never even in the lives of the canines had anything of the kind occurred before in Rough Shod's little city.

Straight to his cabin steered the chief magistrate, groaning at every step, and cursing at every breath.

His dignity was wilted, his power over the people lost.

No longer could he hold sway over them as a ruler of the town, when one weak woman had by the simple turning over of her hand chastised him publicly, until he was forced to beat an ignominious retreat.

Out among the border towns no man is deemed fit for office, no matter how humble it may be, whose courage is doubtful, or who will "turn tail and run" in a battle.

The Honorable Clancy knew this, and he was not long in realizing that he had come to public disgrace, and that his days as "boss" in the town were literally at an end.

Once within his cabin he gave way to a round of profanity that was frightful to hear; he cursed all things below and above, and raved with the vehemence of a madman.

After he had grown calmer, he applied liquor freely to his swollen cheeks and jaws, and also to his inner man. The result was that his rage diminished somewhat, but his evil nature received all the rancor and stored it away for a fresh outbreak.

Waiting until night had firmly settled its mantle over the earth, he resorted to his box of wigs, and soon succeeded in disguising himself beyond recognition. Evident it was that he had long practiced the art, judging by his instantaneous success.

Arming himself well, he again resorted to his liquor-flask, and when he had emptied it, left the cabin.

To the Fair Shake saloon he next took himself, and although the place was crowded he passed for a stranger.

After about an hour a man entered wearing a watch-chain that sported a dagger-shaped charm of gold.

The disguised mayor at once signaled to him, and was answered, after which both directly left the saloon.

Outside they met, however, in a dark spot, where the moonlight did not penetrate.

"Sh! I am Adair, and have work for the Archangels," the disguised man said, in a low tone. "How many are in town?"

"Ten of the regulars," was the reply.

"Good. That is enough. Get them together as near the candy-shop as you can, when the town is quiet. I will be near, and shall want some help. Be cautious, now."

And then his Honor turned and strode away.

CHAPTER XII.

CULMINATING EVENTS.

PHINEAS PORTER had been hunting after Mr. Oswald Yates. He scarcely knew why, but he had a desire to know if the man was, as he had

surmised, the father of the pretty little candy-woman.

He had therefore taken an afternoon stage down to Leadville, and there instituted inquiries after his man.

"Oswald Yates?" said the clerk of the Hazelton house, reflectively—"well, yes, I believe we have such a party booked—think you will find him in the office, yonder."

Accordingly the detective sought Oswald Yates in the office of the hotel, and found him—a little man of eight-and-forty with a gloomy countenance and gray hair and beard, and bearing a faint resemblance to Edith, thought the detective.

"My name is Porter—I am a detective," he said, in a cool, matter-of-fact way. "I got hold of your name from the register, up in Rough Shod, and I made bold to hunt you up."

"Well, sir, I am willing to hear you through. Go on, sir!" the Chicagoan replied, lowering his paper. "I presume it will not take you long to say what you have to say."

"I trust not," Phineas replied. "I come to ask you if you know of the death of your daughter?"

Now the detective was only venturing the conclusion that the dead girl was this man's offspring. But it was a way he had of making a dive at conclusions, and he seldom fell short of his mark.

"I have read of the affair," Oswald Yates replied, indifferently. "It was a sad case, but I had no power to remedy it."

"But, you still have another daughter in Rough Shod, who needs your fatherly protection?"

"No, sir, you are mistaken. She is well able to take care of herself, without my aid. She left my roof on her own hooks, and I have washed my hands of her."

"You are an unnatural parent!"

"And a just one. For a stranger, you seem particularly interested in my affairs."

"It is a part of my business to be interested in the affairs of everybody," the detective replied, as he arose and bowed himself out.

He was satisfied now, and returned by the next stage to Rough Shod. The first thing he did was to visit Carroll Holly at the jail.

The young man was engaged in reading an old yellow-covered novel which Constable Holloway had compassionately tossed in to him, but looked up with a pleasant smile and nod, as the detective entered, and drew his chair up near. For the detective Carroll held a great liking.

"Well, how do you stand it? I suppose you are getting tired of these quarters, eh?" Porter said, good-naturedly.

"Yes. I should prefer the freedom of the outer air, as a choice," Carroll returned, with a faint smile. "I suppose, however, I cannot have my wishes gratified until I take my final snuff, to-morrow morning."

"Probably not. I would release you, were it not for compromising my position as a detective. Something may turn up, however, yet, to free you. They outnumbered me, at the trial, or you would now be free."

"Well, you did your best, and are not to

blame. If I die, Clancy Adair will be answerable before the great judgment-court, for my life."

"Then you are willing to die for the crimes of another?"

"No; not willing, but still not afraid to die," Carroll replied, a little regretfully. "Indeed, I see no help for it, willing or unwilling."

"Nor I, just now, but something may turn up when we least expect it. Something tells me that you were not born to hang, and I trust and hope that I am right. I will bid you good-by now, and go. Perhaps I can procure a reprieve for you, at least." And shaking hands, the detective took his departure.

After he had gone, Carroll threw himself upon the bed, and lay looking over the situation as it was.

He was a prisoner in jail, and unless he could get free before sunrise, he was doomed to suffer death by hanging, for another man's crimes.

It was not a pleasant prospect to contemplate, although he felt that he had no cause to fear death.

His life had ever been a quiet and serene one, and innocent. His parents had been strict religious people, and had reared him to believe in a God, and the grace and goodness of a master. The main current of his life had ever run smoothly, and he had had no temptation to crime.

But the prospect of being ushered into eternity thus early in life, was not particularly inviting, and he could not be blamed for being down-hearted.

For some hours he lay turning the matter over in his mind, and at last fell off into a troubled sleep. When he awoke, it was with a start. A man was fumbling at the door of his cell, with a bunch of keys. Who he was, Carroll Holly was unable to see, owing to the darkness.

At last he succeeded in unlocking the door, after which he threw it open, and entered the cell.

"Sh! are you there?" he demanded, in a voice that Carroll did not recognize.

"I am here," Carroll replied. "Who are you, and what do you want?"

"I have come to release you," was the calm reply. "It matters not who I am, at present. Wait a moment, and I will set you free."

He was silent a few moments; then a gleam of bright light from a bull's-eye lantern he carried, illuminated the cell. By its light Carroll saw what sort of a looking chap his new friend was—a lithe, iron-framed fellow, attired entirely in black, and wearing a mask upon his face.

"There!" he said, setting the lantern down upon a bench. "I will now cut your bonds, and we must get out of this, ere we are discovered."

"You are Deadwood Dick, are you not?" Carroll demanded, the thought suddenly occurring to him.

"I am," the masked man replied, cutting the confining cords. "How did you know?"

"I didn't; I only guessed at it, from descriptions I have read of you. What object have you in setting me at liberty, sir?"

"The object of man's humanity toward man,"

Deadwood Dick replied. "Come! we have no time to converse, now, for the sooner you are out of here, the better it will be for you."

And motioning Carroll to follow him, the Prince of the Road led the way out into the street.

Here another surprise met Carroll.

Mounted upon horses, and grouped about the jail, were perhaps two-score of masked men, looking grim and spectral under the light of the soaring moon, which poured its rays down warmly over the sleeping town.

Up and down all the long main street the lights had been put out, and not a human was seen abroad except the grim road-agents, of whom Deadwood Dick was the commander.

The Prince of the Road led Carroll to a horse, and motioned for him to mount.

"You will now follow one of my men, who will guide you to a place of safety," he said. "I will join you, later, and conduct you out of the mountains, where you will be safer than here."

Accordingly one of the road-agents led the way stealthily down the street, and, nothing loth, Carroll followed. After the twain had disappeared from view down the street, Deadwood Dick turned to his men.

"Ready, now, boys. Bring out the murderer of Minnie Yates, and we'll hang him to the nearest limb. Out with him, I tell you, for he that killed the young mother and her child, shall have no mercy at the hands of my men. Kruger and Raymond, you may go in for the galoot!"

The two road-agents designated accordingly dismounted, and entered the jail. For several minutes they were gone—then they issued forth, dragging Barry Meredith after them.

The poor wretch was begging and pleading for mercy, piteously, with tears streaming down his face.

At a motion from Dick, the guards stood him upon his feet.

"Algernon Ashton!" the Prince of the Road said, in stern, unpitying tones, "you are standing in the presence of your executioners, and it behooves you to cease your cowardly sniveling, and send up a petition to Heaven for the salvation of your soul. Your crimes are many, and hell stares you in the face unless you can make your peace with a just and merciful God. I give you five minutes to make that peace!"

"Have mercy—have mercy I beg!" the wretch cried, wildly. "For God's sake, do not kill me, gentlemen."

"Do not appeal to me for mercy, for it is useless. I am not the one to look to for mercy in the hereafter. In the present there shall be none, because you have committed foul murder in more than one instance. You shall die. Come! two minutes out of the five have already gone. Boys, get him ready for the boost."

Several of the road-agents dismounted—the doomed man was dragged in under a tree, and a noosed rope fitted around his neck, while the loose end was tossed over a limb which reached out overhead.

Then, at a motion from the chief, enough manned the rope, and at a given signal they pulled, and swung the murderer into eternity.

Upon his forehead was then stamped a mark in the shape of a double cross, and he was left hanging there, a ghastly spectacle, in the moonlight.

While the road-agents remounted, and with Deadwood Dick at their head, they struck into a wild, rollicking song, and galloped out of the town!

A few of the honest citizens were awakened, but took care not to make targets of themselves, for afraid of these night prowlers, were they.

Not long after the departure of Deadwood Dick and his band, another gang similarly dressed, and mounted, appeared in the vicinity of the little gulch candy-shop.

Here they halted and waited, as silent as shadows of the slumbrous night.

Not long had they to wait, however, for a man soon emerged from the candy-shop, bearing in his arms a form wrapped in a heavy cloak. One of the night-hawks assisted him to mount, and then the whole gang galloped away out of the town in the same course taken by Deadwood Dick and his band, a short time previous.

Under spur and lash they urged on their horses through the wild mountain gulch, until—

There was a shout, and the Archangels found themselves surrounded by a swarm of armed, masked men, ten times their own number. Retreat was impossible; advance ditto. On every side they were hedged in, and "covered" by myriads of shining weapons.

"Halt!" cried a stern voice, and from the ranks rode the well-known figure of Deadwood Dick. "You can go no further, my gay knights. You have no choice but to surrender, for we are ten to your one!"

"We ain't goin' to do nothin' o' the kind," the leader argued. "We're a party o' honest miners goin' empty-handed into the upper regions, and you hain't got no right to stop us."

"I allow you are a confounded liar, and that unless you throw down your 'hands,' or rather your 'arms,' we shall be under the painful necessity of sending you down to the lower regions instead of the upper," Deadwood Dick said, grimly. "As Archangels, you are upon your last trail. Come! will you surrender, or shall we take you?"

"Waal, ef we must, we must, I calkylate," the leader replied. "Throw away yer pop-guns and ribticklers, b'yees, an' surrender."

There was a disagreeing murmur at this, but there being nothing else to do, the ruffians surrendered, one by one, and submitted themselves to be bound upon their horses.

When they came to the man with the mask who carried the burden, Deadwood Dick gave vent to a laugh pregnant with bitter sarcasm.

"Your game is foiled, Clancy Adair," he said, derisively, "and you may hand Miss Yates over into my care."

With curses the chief magistrate of Leadville's sister city obeyed, and suffered himself to be bound with the rest. He had played the last card in his pack, and lost!

After the Archangels were securely bound to their horses, Deadwood Dick gave orders to a part of his men, who led the captured outlaws back to Rough Shod and handed them over to the authorities.

With the remainder of his band, the Prince of the Road led the way to a stronghold in the mountains, where he found Carroll already arrived.

Edith was restored from the effects of the chloroform Adair had administered to her, and given the best accommodations the place afforded. Deadwood Dick she did not see, but while she was conversing with Carroll Holly, she was greatly surprised to see Phineas Porter enter.

"You here, Mr. Porter?" she exclaimed, joyfully. "You are the last person I should have expected to see here."

"Very likely, for I seldom appear here in this disguise. I am more generally known as *Deadwood Dick*."

"You Deadwood Dick?"

"The same, lady. The detective whose name I bear recently died here in the hills, from an encounter with a grizzly. On his death-bed he bequeathed to me all his secrets, wealth, and his title, and I have been very successful in bringing several offenders to justice under his name."

In Rough Shod, later, the Archangels were shot.

Carroll remained but a few days in the mountains, and then journeyed East, with the intention of settling down.

Somewhere in the Colorado districts, hidden under the disguise of Phineas Porter, detective, Deadwood Dick lives with his new bride—his third wife, by the way—whose name is Edith.

Until some accident occurs again to betray Dick to his enemies, their wedded life promises to be a blissful one.

While down in Rough Shod, blatant and boastful as ever, yet prosperous and popular, Beautiful Bill holds his own with California Kate ~~or~~ his better-half.

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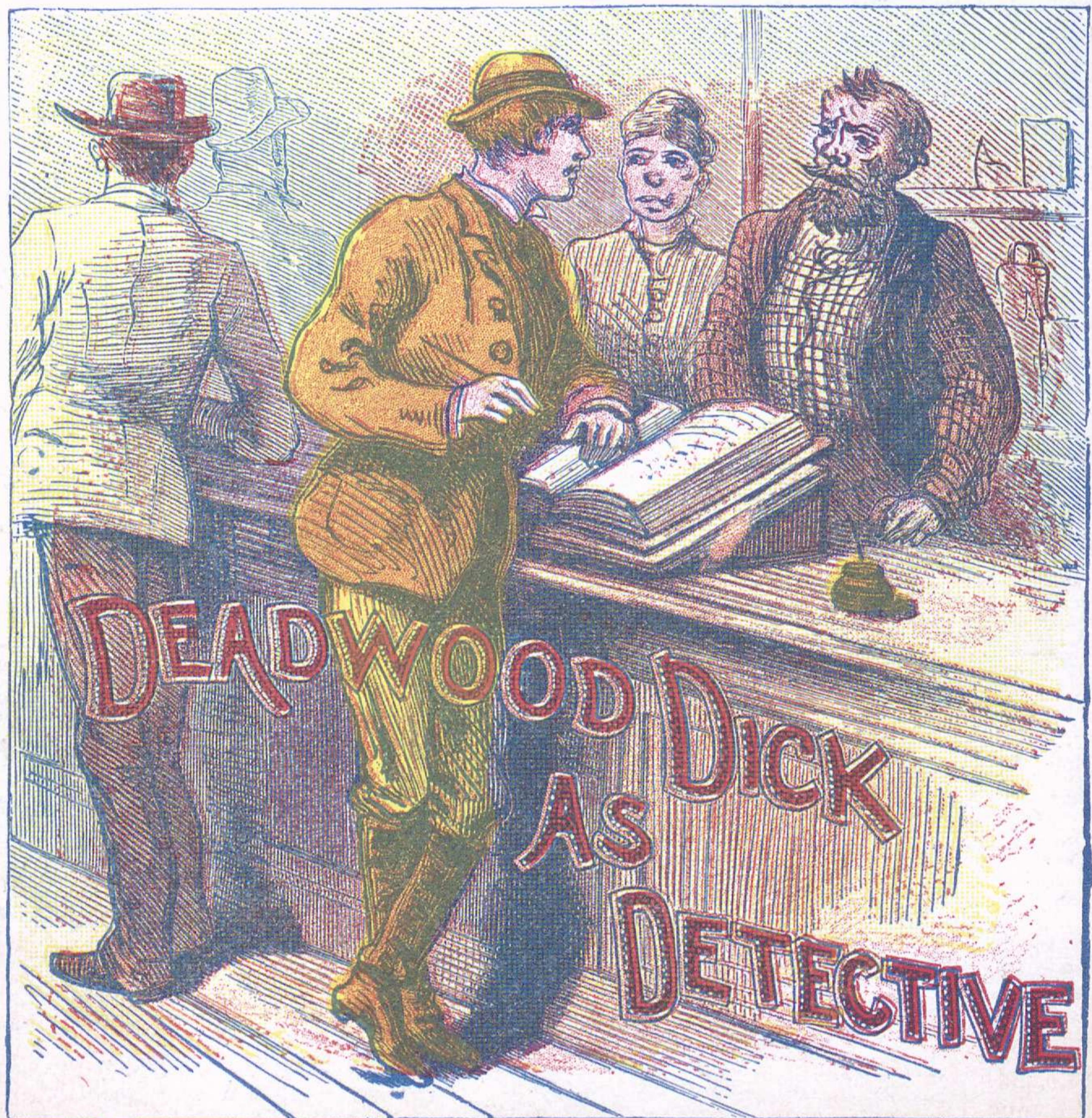


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